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Considerations

ON

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

Suggested by Passages in the Collects for the Sundays in Lent.

BY

GEORGE SEYMOUR HOLLINGS,

SUBWARDEN OF THE DEVON HOUSE OF MERCY, BOVEY TRACEY;
AUTHOR OF "HELPS TO MEDITATION FOR BEGINNERS," "MEDITATIONS ON THE DIVINE LIFE," ETC.

"That it may please Thee to give us true repentance; to forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances; and to endue us with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit to amend our lives according to Thy holy Word;

"We beseech Thee to hear us, good LORD."—*The Litany.*

"Let Thy loving Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness."—Psalm cxliii. 10.

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"Ah, LORD GOD, Thou Holy Lover of my soul, when Thou comest into my heart, all that is within me shall rejoice. Thou art my Glory and the exultation of my heart: Thou art my Hope and Refuge in the day of my trouble. But because I am as yet weak in love, and imperfect in virtue, I have need to be strengthened and comforted by Thee: visit me, therefore, often, and instruct me with all holy discipline. Set me free from evil passions, and heal my heart of all inordinate affections: that being inwardly cured and thoroughly cleansed, I may be made *fit* to *love*, *courageous* to *suffer*, *steady* to *persevere*."—*Imitation of Christ*, Bk. iii. ch. v.

PREFACE.

THESE brief Considerations (the substance of a course of Meditations preached in Oxford in the Lent of 1879) are commended to the Christian reader in the hope that they may suggest some thoughts which may be fruitful in a less inadequate pursuit of the subjects here but fragmentarily treated.

The Author desires the prayers of those who at this holy season are drawing near to GOD, that he with them may be enabled to obey the injunction, "Turn ye even to Me, saith the LORD, with all your heart." (Joel ii. 12.)

BOVEY TRACEY,
Lent, 1883.

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CONSIDERATIONS ON THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

First Sunday in Lent.

THE NATURE AND AIMS OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

"That our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions."—*Collect.*

We are about to meditate, dear brethren, week by week during this Lent, upon certain aspects of the Spiritual Life suggested by the collects for the season. Let us not pursue this very solemn subject without conjoining with our considerations frequent and earnest prayers that God the Holy Ghost may so illuminate our understanding and enkindle our affections that we may both intellectually apprehend, and with pure affection receive, that which He would have us to know, that so the contemplation of spiritual truths may become to us a source of spiritual power to His greater glory and to our souls' health.

I.

And first, then, we have to-day to consider the nature and aims of the Spiritual Life.

The natural life, that which is the life of sense, and is discernible in its phenomena by the outward senses, has its origin in the hidden things of GOD, so that none can explain its nature or declare what it is; its manifestations we may witness, its needs, its tendencies, its claims we may largely recognise, but what is life itself? The learned cannot tell, and we may be content to confess our own absolute ignorance. Yet we talk of "life," and know more of it than we can define, and the world has its maxims for regulating "life," its theories and experiences of "life." When, however, we so speak of life we mean its exercise, its economy (*βίος* rather than *ζωή*), the manner of living rather than the essential life itself, for it is in this exercise of life that one person differs from another, the essential principle being the same in all. And if this is so with the natural life, if its true nature be enveloped with much mystery, so it is also with the spiritual life,—that supernatural principle which was imparted to us when we were made members of CHRIST. We know that we were so made one with Him Who is Himself the Life, by the co-operation of GOD the HOLY GHOST, "the Giver of Life," but the mystery of the nature of that life which is ours may be but very imperfectly apprehended here.

That, then, which we would consider under the name of the Spiritual Life is rather our stewardship of that which is committed to us,—the nature of the soul's correspondence to grace, or of her failure to correspond.

Consider then, dear brethren, that this power to lead the spiritual life has been given to each one of us, and that at this moment "JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye be reprobates." (2 Cor. xiii. 5.) By the HOLY SPIRIT of Union He

dwelleth within you. That HOLY SPIRIT may be welcomed, grieved, resisted; but unless He be quenched He does not altogether abandon the soul which has become His temple in "the Laver of Regeneration." (Tit. iii. 5.) That He does not indeed wholly subdue, possess, and conform us to our LORD arises from the way in which Almighty GOD leaves our will free to operate uncrushed by His almightiness. That we do not at once freely and entirely yield to His attractions arises from the position in which the higher will of man is found. "The reasonable will being placed, as it were, midway between the Divine Will, which is above it, and the inferior will, or the will of the senses, which is beneath it, is continually warring against both, each seeking in turn to draw it, and subdue it, and bring it under obedience." (Scupoli, Spiritual Combat, ch. xii.) And often, influenced by manifold temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, it is found gravitating towards that to which the lower will naturally inclines.

S. Paul exhorts us to "walk in the SPIRIT," (Gal. v. 16,) and to obey this injunction is to lead the spiritual life,—a life wherein our whole being is increasingly conformed to the likeness of CHRIST as impediments are removed which at present prevent this entire possession of our every faculty. The ideal of such a life would be one which no unfaithfulness rendered imperfect,—one of constant obedience to the motions of grace, and this is what we must set before us: the aim of those pursuing it must be that which our LORD has Himself proposed to us—"Be ye perfect, even as your FATHER Which is in heaven is perfect." (S. Matt. v. 48.)

Truly an amazing command! But as the mountain-peak from afar off appears inaccessible to the traveller, yet nevertheless step by step may be attained after many toilsome efforts, so it is with the object of the Christian's journey. And as the sight of the unearthly beauty of the far-off mountain top—bathed in pure ether, and

> Lifting up to heaven fair battlements
> Touched daintily with hues of tender rose;
> Here tinged with flush of faintest cinnamon,
> There shadowed clefts of lapis lazuli,
> Just pearled with floating vapours; whilst below,
> 'Neath tarn and marsh and heather, rock, and stream,
> Stretch dewy meads of silvered malachite—

invites him who gazes to climb the steep ascent, so let the contemplation of what is before us,—of what is attainable by us,—be our first thought.

On the earthly journey the guide points forward. "See there, yonder is the mountain you would gain." And *our* guide is God the Holy Ghost. Led by Him we come to Lent conscious of many *sins*, but look on and hear the words He puts in our mouths. "Thou shalt purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean: Thou shalt wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." (Ps. li. 7.) Yes, one day, if we obey His godly motions, we shall be whiter than the everlasting snows which crest earth's higher mountains. We come with many *sorrows*. Look forward to that time when, yielding to His grace, moulded by these sorrows, "God shall wipe away all tears" (Rev. xxi. 4) from the eyes of His redeemed. Once more, we come conscious of much *ignorance* and blindness, of inability to see things in their due

correlation. O bright light of the eternal Sun shining upon the height for which we yearn. O lofty mountain-top, far raised above the thick dank vapours of this lower world! O heavenly vision of what is to be, of what shall be, ours if we will but follow JESUS, obeying the motions of His HOLY SPIRIT, how shall all dimness pass away when we attain those heights which now we long for! In struggle with sin and with infirmity, in sorrow and in darkness, the remembrance of Thy glory shall be our support, the hope of Thy possession shall urge on our flagging footsteps and nerve our failing resolution to fresh endeavours. For though "now we see through a glass darkly," "then face to face:" though "now I know in part," "then shall I know even as I am known." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.)

II.

But our Guide will not suffer us to be content with merely gazing upon what is to come. He has set before us that towards which we are to press.

"Be ye perfect." That is the great ideal set before us. We stay and look at ourselves for a moment, and, as the eye regains its focus, we realise how much we must overcome ere we shall have surmounted all that lies between us and that far off vision. And yet the HOLY SPIRIT draws us on that we may pursue the upward path, in faithful and holy obedience responding to His motions within us. Now, just as the men who best succeed in the world are they who first set before them the *ultimate* object towards which they desire to tend, and then pursue with diligent care each *subordinate* object that may aid them to gain one more step in the

direction of that on which they have set their hearts, so it is with the Christian; having his ultimate aim set before him, the immediate aim in the spiritual life should be to reach that point which is next in order on the upward path, and for awhile to concentrate his whole energies upon that alone.

How many a delusion would be dissipated, how many a discouragement would give way, if we would set ourselves thus earnestly to obey in what *next* concerns our fidelity to GOD'S Will.

It is not unlikely that at times the mountain summit may be obscured by some jutting crag overhanging our path, or that when again a glimpse of it is caught it may appear to be farther off than ever; but the Guide knows well the way, and the traveller has but to look to Him to learn where next to plant his foot. And some day, at some unexpected turn of the mountain track, GOD may grant unto him such a revelation as shall help him to believe that, when He will and as He will, in a short time He can fulfil in him a long time, (Wisdom iv. 13,) and so you may sing in hope,

> "It may be I am nearer home,
> Nearer now than I think,
> Nearer my FATHER'S house,
> Nearer the great white Throne,
> Nearer leaving the Cross,
> Nearer wearing the Crown."

Thus let us enter upon our Lenten exercises, having gazed upon the glorious heights to which we are invited, content to address ourselves to the toil of gaining, please GOD, some

few steps, oh that it may be even one step, firmly taken, along the way to perfection.

The aim is clear; the invitation is given; the grace to follow obediently is ours, freely given us in JESUS CHRIST! the Power which worketh in us is that of Almighty GOD: what then have we to do but to recognise all this and not merely to gaze in languid admiration at the far off prospect, and say, "It is not, it cannot be, for me," and to sink back into slothfulness and acquiescence in our grievous imperfections—not to faint after some serious effort and to turn back, our soul much discouraged because of the way (Num. xxi. 4), (as though we were at all expected to bear its hardships in our own strength!) nor to despair if, with Israel at Pi-hahiroth, we seem shut in on every side by natural difficulties and infirmities whilst the enemies from whom we had escaped come again upon us, crying, "GOD hath forsaken him, persecute him and take him, for there is none to deliver him." (Ps. lxxi. 9.) Not so, but rather dismissing all our fears, and in holy folly discrediting all that merely human reason would object, let us surrender ourselves to the motions of the HOLY SPIRIT, and humbly obey Him Who has promised to "be our guide even unto death." His power is indeed irresistible by aught but your own will; yield that continuously to Him, and neither earth nor hell can stay your upward course.

III.

So then, dear brethren, let us consider the motions of GOD the HOLY GHOST as leading us on step by step to what seems at present only to be thought of as something

afar off, to be wondered at; but let us not be deceived through the imperfection which belongs to all earthly figures of heavenly things—the attractions of GOD the HOLY GHOST are not leading us on to some external excellence which we shall not ourselves share; in each aspiration He is revealing unto us that which as the sons of GOD it belongs to us to *be*, and then, having so enlightened us, He proceeds to point out to us the mode of its attainment. It is the Divine purpose that the progress should be "from strength to strength," that our path should be "as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. iv. 18.) Oh if we had been faithful from the first to each successive revelation, both recognising the call and using the means, what might we not now have attained? Alas! my soul, how hast thou turned aside from GOD? how hast thou wearied Him with thy sins? In what depths hast thou striven to hide thyself from Him? But "if I go down to hell Thou art there also." (Ps. cxxxix. 7.) "Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee," and so Thou comest once more revealing what it belongs to me to be and pointing out the way to its attainment even yet.

Yes, dear brethren, that to which He leads He wills that we should be. We may have to repent of much that is past, but ours will be no true repentance unless we make "haste and prolong not the time to keep His commandments." (Ps. cxix. 60.) Let us then consider how much depends upon our doing that which He shows us to be our duty, not hurriedly, but at once; we are ready to acknowledge this in respect to the need of forsaking what we know to be distinctly contrary to a Christian profession, but are we alive

to the importance of a ready obedience to the slightest intimation of GOD'S will for us?

Have we not often rather endeavoured to persuade ourselves that this or that was not a plain duty, that many good Christians do not do this or avoid that, why then should I? but GOD made each soul for some special purpose to His special glory, and we have not done what He made us to do. But the voice pleaded on, for awhile, perhaps; and now? . . . . Is it hushed? And if so, why? Is it because we have obeyed, or because GOD the HOLY GHOST, the Spirit of Him Who once mourned over Jerusalem, when she knew not the day of her visitation, has been grieved, and has taken from us what once He held out for our acceptance.

"If thou hadst known at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." (S. Luke xix. 42.) Let us at least suspect ourselves of many sinful negligences, and humble ourselves before GOD for these as well as for more wilful offences, for we must expect the motions of GOD the HOLY GHOST to become more and more delicate in their operation; if we have in anywise obeyed Him in plainer commandments He will speedily invite us to choose His Will and not our own, even in what we might be apt to esteem very little things, and we ought to become capable of detecting and of experiencing the power of those movements of Divine Grace which were once entirely unrecognised by us. As the ear of the musician by training acquires an exquisite perception of the subtlest beauties of music, as the eye of the painter can discriminate the elements of some harmonious combination of colour, so that they derive great delight from much that is inappreciable by

many who yet are not without some sense of what is true and beautiful in either art, so it is with souls who are growing in obedience to the HOLY GHOST, what was once without significance to them becomes full of meaning, and GOD'S will for the soul is recognised by a holy intuition, and as it is embraced obedience becomes habitual, and the supernatural life dominates the whole man until in body, soul and spirit he moves with the motions of the Life of GOD within him. Such an one has lost self-will in the surrender of all he has and is to GOD; his own personal will acts more truly than before, but so entirely in union with the Will of GOD that his life is quite single in its aim, (Conf. S. Matt. vi. 22,) and as to his merely natural wishes and desires, he is dead and his true "life is hid with CHRIST in GOD." (Col. iii. 3.)

So, then, the truly Spiritual Life is a life of loving obedience to the Will of GOD in faithful correspondence to His Grace; its ultimate aim is Perfection; its immediate aim to fulfil perfectly what He next enjoins upon us Who invites each of us this Lent to take one firm step forward, and Who, as He invites, so too enables us to will and to do of His good pleasure.

To Whom, FATHER, SON and HOLY GHOST, be now and evermore ascribed all honour and glory. Amen.

Second Sunday in Lent.

WEAKNESS AND STRENGTH.

"We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves."—*Collect.*

LAST week, dear brethren, we considered the nature and aims of the Spiritual Life; we saw that it is one of obedience to the "godly motions" of the HOLY GHOST, and that whilst the ultimate aim is nothing less than perfection, its immediate object is the attainment of that to which we are next invited by GOD, and we resolved that by His Grace we would each of us take at least one firm step forward this Lent.

I.

To-day we are to meditate upon the weakness and the strength which belong to the life which we are seeking to lead. Daily during this second week of the penitential season do we appeal for succour to Almighty GOD as to One Who seeth "that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves," and we shall do well, seriously to reflect upon this aspect of the soul's life, for although in making our resolve to press forward in the path of obedience, we prayed for "grace to use such abstinence that the flesh

being subdued to the Spirit we may ever obey His godly motions in righteousness and true holiness," we are not because of that prayer made at the beginning of any work or at the commencement of any fresh endeavours to think ourselves delivered once for all from the danger of attempting to do GOD'S work in our own strength; for so great is the tendency of our nature to depend upon its own energies that we must continually renew the recollection of our own insufficiency, lest what has been "begun" in GOD be "continued," or, alas, still worse, even "ended," in self, and so our work perish, as being altogether apart from the Spiritual Life, merely natural at the best, and so doomed to pass away with all that is of this transitory world.

Yes, dear brethren, we cannot, let us be assured, take one step forward without some previous advance towards a truer knowledge of our own nothingness; no upward step on the road to perfection is possible without first sinking in deeper self-abasement before the All-Perfect. The world's way to success is to seek it by force of will, by indefatigable and persevering industry, by fighting in a spirit of self-reliant fortitude against all that opposes our progress: this is its nobler side, and indeed it is not without trace of the nobility of man's nature as GOD made him in His own image; but, perverted to the worship of self rather than of GOD, "How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed!" (Lam. iv. 1.) And so, weaning us from all thought of reliance upon this world's strength, and revealing to us Almightiness manifested in weakness, JESUS CHRIST, indeed, came to bring life, but by dying; to be a King, but one whose sceptre here was a reed, His crown a crown of

thorns. Born in a stable and dying a shameful death, He has taught us, as a fundamental law of His kingdom, that in order to rise we must first descend, that he that is poor in spirit is blessed, that "he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (S. Matt. v. 3; S. Luke xviii. 14.)

Happy they who early learn this lesson, and, abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, can say "unto the LORD, Thou art my hope and my stronghold, my GOD, in Him will I trust," for to such it is promised, "He shall deliver thee from the snare of the hunter and from the noisome pestilence; He shall defend thee under His wings, and thou shalt be safe under His feathers: His faithfulness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler." (Ps. xci. 1—4.) In proportion to the force of the natural character is the danger of acting in the spirit of self-reliance, but the danger is common to us all, and GOD would have all learn their weakness. As we are intractable or docile, we shall need more or less of painful experience to teach us our own inability to do one good thing apart from the Divine assistance, but even when this fault is very hidden, and natural means have not been altogether unsanctified by prayer, we shall still, upon communing with our own hearts, have to confess that we have failed to sustain a supernatural dependence upon GOD, and have acted only too much in unrecollected reliance upon our own strength.

Of old time Israel in Egypt "built for Pharaoh treasure-cities, Pithom and Raamses," (Ex. i. 11,) and we, it is not unlikely, labouring as they, in hard bondage to the human spirit, have built up much that must be left entirely behind us as we consent to go forth with JESUS into the wilderness way to which He bids those He loves. We have

planned and have had a strong will to execute our plan, but God has willed otherwise and has taken us away, He has just spoken and all has been frustrated. And we have no idea why this should be, or at best but a conjecture, a glimpse of what He intends. And now He keeps us wandering about in this wilderness, not knowing whither our next day's journey may take us, whilst the great walls we built to guard the wealth of that Pharaoh of our own will, our Pithom and Raamses, are far away. Ah, they were brave walls, my brethren, but the farther off the better now for us, for so Almighty God lifts us from out our slavery to the natural will, and we hear the prophetic word speaking to us the lesson we are so slow to learn, "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Zech. iv. 6.)

We may be tempted to cry out that at least there was something in what we did once, but that now we seem to be spending our strength in a mere fruitless wandering, hungering and thirsting, or even fainting at the terrors of the Lord; but let us be still before Him, for "them that are meek shall He guide in judgment, and such as are gentle, them shall He learn His way." (Ps. xxv. 8.) As one has sung, "Labour and sorrow are strong, and patient endurance is God-like."

II.

But it may be that such experiences are not our own, either not now, or perhaps not at all, as a marked feature in our spiritual life; for there are, dear brethren, many ways in which we may have to learn to "lean only upon the hope of His heavenly grace,"—ways of dealing with us proportioned to our varying dispositions to what we are by nature, by our

own sins, or by grace. As GOD, too, reveals to us the weakness of self-will, He would reveal also to us the weakness of self-love. Let us, then, suppose that a soul has been for some time on the whole consistently faithful to the motions of the HOLY SPIRIT to have done something for GOD, and to have made some real efforts at an entire self-surrender,—to have dared something for the love of GOD, and known something of the sweetness of suffering for Him Who has died for her,—and so grace responded to has been followed as ever by "more grace." But there ensues a time of less direct contest, and with it the danger of fervour insensibly passing away, and the soul begins, at first without at all suspecting it, to settle down into habits of unsupernatural life and action. Now, in such a case it is very likely that there are other faults which a prayerful inquiry would disclose, but there is one which we may fairly assume has been at the root of much that is now grieving the HOLY SPIRIT. We have been taking too much for granted the continuance of that power and glow which special grace imparts. GOD has done so much for us, we have found Him so true to His promises, that He will fill "the hungry with good things,"—that we have grown accustomed to the wondrous phenomena of grace, and have almost forgotten that there is such a thing as the possibility of the withdrawing of those Divine succours. Our own need of discipline, our own abiding weakness, may not, indeed, have been altogether forgotten, but it has been so swallowed up in the merciful abundance of the strength which GOD giveth, that we have unconsciously almost come to take our perseverance as of course, and we have need to learn more perfectly what we

are. And so the sensible support of GOD'S grace is withheld for a time, and the soul finds herself in quite another atmosphere,—in another world, or rather in *that* world, and only too much *of* that world, from which GOD had been weaning her.

But lately such an one was full of thanksgiving, and cried aloud, "O give thanks unto the LORD, for He is gracious, and His mercy endureth for ever. Who can express the noble acts of the LORD, or show forth all His praise?" (Ps. cvi. 1, 2.) But now he finds holy joy has passed away, everything seems to go wrong, prayer is not what it was,—even the Blessed Sacrament seems to have lost much of Its wondrous power. Oppressed, and seeming for the time to be incapable of any real communion with GOD, the purpose of his life seems to have eluded him. "When the LORD turned again the captivity of Sion, then were we like unto them that dream," (Ps. cxxvi. 1,)—he has been raised in Holy Vision above the attractions of that Babylon wherein so many still preferred to abide; but now the vision has gone from him, and the tempter, ever near to profit by his opportunity, assails the will through the affections and the intellect; suggesting some more "reasonable" way in religion, and attracting the affections towards what belongs to the natural life, showing him what he has "in his folly" surrendered, and for what?

Alas! the soul seems losing her love for GOD, and replies to herself, For what? Just to come to this awful prostrate weakness,—this aimless misery. And here, may be, the fiend bursts into derisive laughter, and we are tempted to be vexed with ourselves, and to sigh for "the leeks, and the

onions, and the garlic," and for "the flesh-pots" of Egypt. (Num. xi. 5; Exod. xvi. 3.) Ah, this is a sad temptation which has befallen us permitted by GOD to show us what we are still apart from His special support. We have seen once more our weakness, shall it be a blessing to us, or will we refuse to learn the lesson set before us?

Ah, what is it that is stirring within us, waxing stronger and re-asserting itself as the love of GOD languisheth within? What is this which thus enervates the whole being and threatens to dissolve the bands of the spiritual life? It is *self-love*, and should it triumph now it will go hard with us; for see what is the downward progress of such an one.

He listens to the temptations suggested by the Devil, and brings not his weakness to the feet of JESUS CHRIST, but dwells upon the suggestions which are but too much in accordance with the desires of self-love. The gracious GOD is hidden from him, and as GOD has been the very desire of his heart, in what a misery he beholds himself to be, what an emptiness is his! And so he is perplexed, and soon, very likely, a peevishness of spirit arising, he is ready to murmur against GOD, perhaps he rashly criticises GOD'S dealings with men, greater weariness with religion follows, and devotion becoming distasteful, he leaves off some of his practices of piety. Spiritual sloth grows upon him, venial sins multiply, the whole life is lax and disordered in comparison with what it was, and the soul sinks into a spiritual lethargy tending to develope great despondency, deepening into the beginnings of despair, and into the be-

ginnings of distaste for GOD, the first lurid reflections from those dread fires of undying hatred towards Him which consume the lost.

And all this because the soul did not thankfully and humbly accept the clearer revelation of her own weakness which GOD had granted.

But see, should the disciple abase himself, and cry out of the deep of his own nothingness to Him, there shall steal over him a sense of welcoming his helplessness, as he recognises that thus the LORD prepares him to be what He wills, and is fitting him to receive more grace, and when the revelation of himself has done its preparatory work, when he has known afresh his abiding feebleness apart from the mercy of GOD, when he has in loving trustfulness endured the assaults of Satan, vexing and confusing the mind and saddening the heart, when the temptations to be wearied with prayer and to sink down into self-indulgent ways,—appealing as they have done to so much, that the impulses of the love of GOD had before overborne, but which now reasserts itself,—have shown to him that the feeblest resolve to serve Him, the least regularity in prayer, the smallest acts of self-sacrifice are inspired by Him, and that they are impossible without His grace; when perseverance in grace seems far from a matter of course, then again the flood of grace shall inundate the soul in a yet mightier wave than before, and the Christian shall go forth blessed, so long as he thus abide in holy dependence, with this very grace of perseverance; a perseverance ever tending to ripen into final perseverance; and final perseverance means a good death, and that means Paradise with JESUS, a final ac-

quittal at the Awful Day, and an entrance abundantly ministered into the Everlasting Kingdom of our LORD and SAVIOUR.

III.

So then in these and in many other instances GOD reveals unto us, as we can bear it, the weakness of self-love, the weakness of self-will; checking in His children the working out of the designs of the most energetic will, that He may show to them both the futility of any enterprise apart from the communications of His own Divine impulses, and also the continuance within us of that tendency to self-reliant action which belongs to the pride of our fallen nature. And in like manner He deals with the movements of self-love, which He holds in check by the power of His grace, but which are only so restrained from working our overthrow. But in neither case is there cause for discouragement. Almighty GOD discloses to us the presence of these forms of evil that we may co-operate with Him in their defeat; He shows to us the weakness of our unassisted will, not that we may give way to inaction, but in order that we may be enabled to will with a heavenly energy those things which He desires of us. He shows to us the weakness of self-love, only that delivered from its paralysis, we may be made partakers of such blessedness as it hath not "entered into the heart of man to conceive." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

Ah, we are all weak, but weakness in the spiritual life becomes strength when recognised and brought before GOD. The weakness that hinders us from pressing on is the weakness which is filled with self-sufficiency, the weakness which

comes in its emptiness to GOD, which rejects all aid that is not of Him, that knows no other sufficiency than His; such weakness He loves indeed to fill with His Almightiness, yea, with Himself, that we may be able to sing "The LORD JEHOVAH is my strength, I will trust and not be afraid." (Isa. xii. 2.)

So, dear brethren, let us consider the loving paradox of our strength in weakness,—desiring humbly to imitate the Apostle of CHRIST: "As poor yet making many rich, as having nothing and yet possessing all things." (2 Cor. vi. 10.) We have dwelt mostly upon our weakness, let us look up and behold again the source of our strength, gazing by an act of faith at JESUS CHRIST as He sits enthroned "at the right hand of the Majesty on High." (Heb. i. 3.) What is He there, that glorious King before Whom Angels veil their faces and adore? Are you here to-day baptized into CHRIST, anointed with His Spirit, fed with His Body and Blood, cleansed by the Blood of Sprinkling from your sins? Oh, look up and see the very Spouse of thy redeemed humanity, Bone of His Bone, and Flesh of His Flesh as thou art, the King rules there for thee, and bids thee share the power of His Throne,—"all things are possible to him that believeth," and to "him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My FATHER in His Throne." (Rev. iii. 21; Eph. v. 30.)

Or see Him as He stands within the Holiest, and lifts for us those pierced hands in mighty and prevailing Oblation of the One Offering well-pleasing unto GOD our Great High Priest for ever, Who has, Himself the Victim, died

for our sins, and has risen again for our justification. Contemplate the mightiness of the Propitiation, and consider the communicated oneness with His Holy Offering which is ours as here too at the Altar of His Holy Church He pleads the same all-prevailing Sacrifice.

Oh, how all sense of mere sorrow at our weakness would pass from us if we more faithfully meditated upon these things, if we "gave ourselves wholly to them," (1 S. Tim. iv. 15;) how fully should we yield our miserable reserves and be wholly emptied of self that we might be filled with Thee! Vain indeed would be our own unaided endeavours to conquer our spiritual foes, full of all malignity, and vast in their knowledge of human nature's weakness, but one with JESUS Who overcame, we too must overcome; "Kings and Priests unto GOD," Kings even now, though hidden and not of this world be the kingdom; priests indeed in sharing the ever-pleaded Sacrifice; in Eucharist and in the lowliest prayer one with JESUS, and shielded by His might,

> "For Satan trembles when he sees
> The weakest Saint upon his knees,"

and well he may, for so "out of weakness" are GOD'S faithful children "made strong." (Heb. xi. 34.) Hear Him our Prophet of good tidings, as well as our Priest and King.

"Fear not, little flock, it is your FATHER'S good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (S. Luke xii. 32.) "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (S. Matt. viii. 26.) Let us then turn to Him and trustfully reply, "Behold GOD is my

salvation, I will trust and not be afraid, for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song." (Isa. xii. 2, 3.)

Nay, let us heartily *rejoice* in the strength of our salvation, for it is written of the people of GOD that "the joy of the LORD is your strength." (Neh. viii. 10.)

And now to GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST be all honour and glory for ever. Amen.

Third Sunday in Lent.

DESIRES.

"Look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants."—*Collect.*

We are met together again, dear brethren, to consider the Spiritual Life, the aim of which we have seen is perfection, to be attained by faithful obedience to the hourly motions of God the Holy Ghost. We have considered its weakness, (that is to say, ourselves apart from God's Grace,) the weakness which comes of our self-will, the weakness of our self-love; its strength, as found in Jesus Christ, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, yet one with us by an ineffable union, yes, our own if we be united to Him by the Sacraments received with right dispositions; Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, ever living to make intercession for us—"Himself the Victim and Himself the Priest;"—"The Lamb as it had been slain," (Rev. v. 6,) ever presenting the Adorable Sacrifice of the Cross in Heaven above and in the Holy Mysteries of the Altar on earth, wherein He, by our hands, shows forth His Death till He come, (1 Cor. xi. 26,) Jesus Christ, our Prophet, speaking to us encouraging words: "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (S. Luke xii. 32.) We are assured that He Who has given us the

will to resolve to take one distinct step forward at this time will not leave us to our own weakness, but will be our strength and support. "Behold, GOD is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid." (Isa. xii. 2.)

I.

And now we pass on to the subject for our meditation to-day, namely, the desires which are proper to the Spiritual Life. "We beseech Thee, Almighty GOD, look upon the hearty desires of Thy humble servants."

How needful it is for us to consider this aspect of the inner life, we shall see at once when we remember that the work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in our hearts, largely consists in enkindling and quickening within us holy desires, that reaching forth unto that which He enables us to desire we may, at length, attain the perfect satisfaction of every holy longing.

It is a fundamental law of GOD's dealings with us in the kingdom of Grace that He requires the co-operation of our own wills. The act of the will may be feeble, we may but be able to say, LORD, help me, fortify my will that it may tend towards Thine! we may be hardly conscious that the balance has actually turned to GOD, but the act of will, with whatever imperfection, must be made, for GOD desired not the service of a slave or the unreasoning action of a machine when He made man in His own likeness, and afterwards, by the inestimable price of His own Blood, redeemed him from the servitude of Satan. He *enables* us "both to will and to do," (Phil. ii. 13,) but He *coerces* us in neither. We must ourselves, in His strength, will and desire in order that

we may attain. So then, dear brethren, if we are to make any advance towards a closer walk with God we must really, first of all, enlarge our desires, taking heed that we have right desires that we may will to obtain that which is their object. Now the desires of the soul, which God has implanted in her, are like the natural appetites of a healthful body, monitors of what is needed for the sustenance and developed perfection of our life.

We need but little observation to assure ourselves that the soul of man is not self-satisfying, self-sufficing. On every side we behold men eagerly pursuing various objects, striving to fulfil various purposes, with an intensity which can only proceed from some strong impulse actuating their lives and moving them thus earnestly to endeavour to gain that which they are seeking; that is to say, on the one hand there are souls capable of desires, on the other things which appear to be the complements of those desires, and which, therefore, exercise a power of greater or less attraction upon the will of man. There is, in truth, a hunger in our souls which, whether it be considered theoretically or not, finds its expression in our lives. The pursuit of knowledge, the delight in all that is comprised under the name of culture, the desire for the society, the affection, and esteem of others, the passion for travel; these and many other such things testify to our need of what is outside our own being, and witness to a hunger which so seeks its satisfaction. And again, mingling with the desire for what we have not, there is largely present also a desire to impart to others, ourselves to contribute something to their wants, to know the delight of leading them to recognise the truth and beauty of some overmaster-

ing thought which has become part of our own nature, to render back something of that which we have received of love, of illumination, of enlarged conceptions, of keener appreciation of what is noble, beautiful, and worthy of emulation. There are thus present to man's soul these two great desires—to receive and to give—whilst underlying and, in a hidden way, dominating both, and ever and anon more urgently asserting its claims upon the will, is the longing for the Sabbath day of our nature, for that Seventh day of perfection when, in the developed completeness of all that the soul has desired, she may be truly and absolutely at rest.

Some such beautiful dream is, I suppose, whether it be analysed or not, perhaps the more certainly there the less it is so apprehended, floating before the imagination of every thoughtful child. Alas, my brethren, for the man or woman who contemns and makes light of the radiant fancy! But where do they find their resolution? See we have spoken of the nobler desires of the soul, not one unworthy; of knowledge, of refined culture, of love one toward another, of imparting to others what we have ourselves received; but so far from these really finding their satisfaction, the experience of centuries emphasises an opposite conclusion; the thwartings of circumstances, the blight of disease, that heavy hand of death which is not far from any even at his happiest moments—the wise man knowing himself to be but as a child straying by the sea-shore and picking up here and there some cast-up treasure from the great deep which hides so much from him, and too often perceiving also that "in much wisdom is much grief, and he that increaseth knowledge

increaseth sorrow," (Eccles. i. 18;) all these testify that man's desires are still unsatisfied, and that his most cherished anticipations and most carefully matured plans are of little worth in this world of ceaseless change! Oh, is there not *something* to which these desires of the soul should really lead us? some better conclusion than that of the miserable passionist of to-day—that "childhood is a delusion, youth a folly, and old age a regret?" Have these desires no place in the right ordering of a true life?

II.

Dear brethren, as we have suggested to you some thoughts upon the desires of the soul, it may have occurred to your minds that these did not belong to the Spiritual Life properly, though doubtless their due regulation would form no inconsiderable part of the exercise of a religious self-discipline: and, indeed, we readily admit that much that forms the lives of men who express in outward acts their recognition of the claims of these desires upon their will, is utterly unspiritual; yet, nevertheless, these desires, in their origin, belong to the truth of our spiritual nature, and when subjected to the authority of a will surrendered to GOD and illuminated by Divine knowledge, they are undoubtedly essential to the true development of that nature and to our true happiness. To give and to receive and to find rest to our souls, these all surely belong to a duly-ordered Christian life, for we are not taught to be without desires, but are to withdraw our superior will from ill-ordered desires, prompted by the merely human short-sighted faithlessness and corruption of unregenerate nature; from such

desires as are found, even in the regenerate, through that evil bent of the flesh which exists still within them, although the guilt of original sin has been washed away in Baptism.

It is the miserable mistaking of what are and are not worthy objects of our desires that so often grieves the HOLY SPIRIT, and even to ourselves it seems wonderful how we can be so blind. As one groping his way amidst a labyrinth of tortuous and narrow streets and ignorant of their relative position and of whither they lead, so is many a man here. Oh let us rise and in prayer ascend above the accidents of life, that as from some holy hill we may at least see where is the highway of our King! As the ancients who, ignorant of GOD, adored the majesty of the material Day-star as it rose and set in wondrous beauty, or glowing in all the wealth of noontide light upon them, seemed to dispense the richest blessings to this lower world, so are too many of us, the worship which should be GOD'S we give unto another—the desires which should reach after Him, stretch forth after some inferior good and find, for a brief day, some sun, His creature, rather than our GOD.

Oh that we would but turn to the first page of our Bibles once again, and, kneeling down before Him, read the words so often read, spelt out so long ago, and often since, perhaps, cavilled at secretly because their statements so little satisfy our curiosity, "In the beginning *God created* the heavens and the earth." (Gen. i. 1.) Oh that we would pray humbly to Him for the sake of JESUS CHRIST, to teach us by His Spirit, really and truthfully to say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in com-

parison of Thee." (Ps. lxxiii. 24.) So would He enable us to rise to a nobler, larger, more coherent view of all that is about us, as we should yield our life to Him Who made both ourselves and every subordinate object of our desires, and thus recalling to mind our duty, our privilege, our joy of supremely loving and desiring GOD, should we learn that, in Him Who has created all inferior good things, we may expect to find all that they can offer to us, and infinitely more.

If, dear brethren, we are following the "godly motions" which are stirring within us, the realisation of this great truth will become increasingly easy to us. It has been well said, that "grace more than age dissipates delusions." Now old age must indeed dissipate the illusions of those who seek to find their satisfaction in the creature, and hence the old age of a philosophic world tends to pessimism, and reasonably so, apart from the recognition of GOD. Would that through grace responded to that other illusion may pass away which hides from many the love of the Creator! For after all, if it were not for the sicknesses and disorders of our souls we should rush forth to meet GOD, impelled by the same delightful attraction which wins the little child back to his mother's bosom. In Him, as revealed in CHRIST, by anticipation in the Old Testament and openly manifested in the New, we cannot fail to find all we seek. Uncreated Wisdom, in whose depths we may refresh ourselves, and bathing in whose Living Waters the blindness of nature passes from us, whilst visions of manifold and transcendent loveliness shining in upon the lowly and penitent soul that tremblingly seeks to be taught of GOD, reveal to those else

untaught more than a lifetime of arduous study could ever hint to the student thirsting for light but coming not to The Light. Yes, "all things are yours," the Society of GOD, the ever blessed and undivided Trinity; Communion by virtue of union with the One LORD, through the One Spirit, with all the Faithful, both here or "in the Hand of GOD," awaiting their final consummation and bliss; Society by oneness of desire and therefore of prayer one for another; the Society of the Holy Angels, who "joy over one sinner that repenteth," (S. Luke xv. 7,) and as "ministering spirits are sent forth to minister to them that be the heirs of salvation," (Heb. i. 14;) "all are yours, and ye are CHRIST'S, and CHRIST is GOD'S." (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.)

And is it part of our nature to desire to give as well as to receive? Here, too, does our GOD Who made us, meet us with His Love, for He, Incarnate, has by His Holy Apostle called His Church, "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph. i. 23.) Yes, you by the surrender of yourself to Him contribute to the wondrous completion of His mystical Body: you are, enabled by His Grace and nourished by His Body and Blood, helping to fulfil Him Who is fulness itself. He who needs nothing has yet willed, after the order of His Holy Incarnation, not to be complete without His members—the "Perfect Man" (Eph. iv. 13) is yet coming, and you may be of that perfection!

Or, again, is the desire for rest strong in our hearts? We shall find in "GOD with us," (S. Matt. i. 23,) rest far worthier the name than aught here can give, for even here, "we which have believed do enter into rest," (Heb. iv. 3,) the rest not of lying down in unconsciousness, to

part for a time with those cares and sorrows and perplexities which are so often with us, but a rest which shall come from being in His Arms Who here has "borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," (Isa. liii. 4,) and Who is Himself the solution of the paradoxes which perplex us, Himself the consummation of all that can bring joy and peace. To give, and to receive, and to find rest for our souls! these are, indeed, desires of our nature which the LORD and Lover of men Who made us recognises, and in the recognition of which His Divine Voice has invited whosoever will to "come and take of the water of Life freely," (Rev. xxii. 17;) has bidden those who have "freely received to freely give," (S. Matt. x. 8;) and called us to learn of Him that we "may find rest unto our souls." (S. Matt. xi. 29.)

III.

And now let us very briefly consider some of the fruits of this determination of our desires towards GOD,—and first of all it will surely work in us the spirit of *detachment*, of comparative indifference to the things of this passing life. "Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. vii. 29—31.) Eager undisciplined pursuit of anything here becomes impossible to us as we see JESUS by the eye of faith, and hear the voice

calling us on, ever on, away from our self, our sins, our merely earthly hopes.

We shall grow too in the *spirit of mortification*, in readiness to accept any trials whether spiritual or from external events, recognising God's desire thereby to remove something which at present keeps us from receiving the further revelations of Himself which He is preparing us to receive.

Desires after God will as they become stronger deepen our hatred of sin, and our *penitence* for all our own offences, and a great *longing after* the *sinlessness* of those who rest in Him.

Our life must become more and more the expression of the influence of this overwhelming attraction and increasingly *simple*, as the love of God inspires our various acts, Jesus Christ being our all, and other persons and things taking their place as they conform us to Him, or as He is in them.

And as the desires of the soul become more habitually turned towards Him, our life must become one of more *continuous prayer;* "we know not what we should pray for as we ought," for we know not what we need to make us more capable of God, but the Spirit of God "helpeth our infirmities," and "maketh intercession for us" with those inarticulate utterances of the soul which He prompts and stimulates. (Rom. viii. 26.)

Detachment, mortification, spirit of penance, desire after sinlessness, simplicity of aim, a prayerful spirit—these, yes, and every good and holy disposition may be looked for from a soul that has something of the spiritual second

sight which belongs to those who have the love of GOD shed abroad in their hearts. (Rom. v. 5.)

And oh, dear brethren, let us be assured that GOD does not mock us. The presence of this desire, as it is a help to faith, the very existence of the hunger of the soul which nothing here can really satisfy, arguing the existence of the Supremely Satisfying One, so also is it a ground of hope.

Yes, that we have any such desires, that we are here to-day to consider the spiritual life, is enough to give us a great hope that He Who "hath begun a good work" in us, "will perform it until the day of JESUS CHRIST." (Phil. i. 6.)

We must be prepared to encounter many a delay, and to have to experience many vicissitudes, but the desires of the soul shall be surely granted, and shall one day receive a satisfaction which it hath not "entered into the heart of man to conceive." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) Only let us be of good courage, and dare to desire much of GOD, and as the Prophet of old who was a man of desires, we shall be visited by Him. Yes, we have said, let us *dare* to desire GOD, for who are we that we should seek Him Who is a consuming fire! "I am come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?" (S. Luke xii. 49.)

Who indeed are we! Yet, "O LORD GOD most Holy, O LORD most Mighty, O Holy and most Merciful SAVIOUR, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death," nor suffer us to know the unquenchable fire of Thy just judgments upon the wicked. Rather do Thou suffer the fire of Thy love, which by the Wood of Thy Cross burst forth into

so great a flame of Divine Charity, to burn away all that of evil or unworthy desire still dwells within us; teach us to love Thee, and to live in the ever-growing desire to experience Thy love, its "length, and breadth, and depth, and height," yea, to "know the love of CHRIST which passeth knowledge." (Eph. iii. 18.)

In the Fioretti of S. Francis, it is related of John della Pinna, that when he was yet a boy at Ancona, our LORD appeared to him one night as the Holy Child, and bade him attend the preaching of one of the companions of S. Francis, to listen to his words, and to believe his teaching,—that he would then make a great journey, and so come to Him. The boy did as he had been bidden, and applying for admission to the Order of Friars Minor, was told by the Brothers to come to Ricanati, to be there received. Feeling sure that this was the journey of which he had been warned, he thought that he should now straightway go to Heaven, but it was not so with him. On another occasion he was sent to Provenza, and ever mindful of the vision, he again hoped for the promised blessing, but there he continued to live for five and twenty years in much sanctity. He was afterwards recalled to Ancona, and again looked for the fulfilment of that for which he so greatly longed, but it was GOD'S will that he should tarry there no less than thirty years; until at length that Will being fully accomplished in His servant, that which had been declared to the innocent child, was fulfilled in the aged saint, and "Brother John joined his hands, and thanked GOD for having permitted him to end the long journey of the present miserable life in the arms of JESUS CHRIST,

to Whom he confided his soul, passing from this mortal life to life eternal with CHRIST the Blessed, Whom he had so long wished and desired to see."

Such, dear brethren, be the sum of our desires, such their reward, for His sake, to Whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

(REFRESHMENT SUNDAY.)

CONSOLATIONS.

"The Comfort of Thy Grace."—*Collect.*

HAVING considered the "nature and aim," and the "strength and weakness" of the Spiritual Life, we last week meditated upon its "desires." We saw that these desires were monitors warning us of our needs; that man finding various external objects which promise to him the satisfaction of the hunger of his soul, his will is drawn to seek the attainment of these objects—but that they fail really to satisfy from the transitoriness and imperfection which belong to them all: that thus these desires could only find their true and abiding satisfaction in GOD, and that in Him the most perfect satisfaction is promised and assured.

In GOD is all we need to receive, more than we can ask or think; in GOD Incarnate is One Who condescends to call His Church "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all," (Eph. i. 23,) that we may have the blessedness of giving even to the Giver of all; lastly, in GOD is to be found the rest of a true satisfaction, the eternal Sabbath of the soul.

I.

And now to-day let us turn to consider something of those

comforts which He provides for us here as we are striving, amidst many difficulties, to be His.

Lent has helped us to a deeper self-knowledge, our sins are proofs to us of our having gone after other gods, and whilst endeavouring to return more truly to Him, we pray, "Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty GOD, that we, who for our evil deeds, do worthily deserve to be punished, by the *comfort of Thy Grace* may mercifully be relieved, through our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST."

Ah! dear brethren, it is by Grace that we learn that our life must be a supernatural life, a reaching forth to that which is above all that we should naturally seek to rest in, an acting out of the prayer, "Draw me, we will run after Thee," (Cant. i. 4;) a fuller obedience to the First Command, "Thou shalt have none other gods but Me." And all this implies suffering in a deepening and abiding sorrow for past sins, and in the working out of our salvation by the destruction of all that in us still displeases GOD.

We are not invited to follow CHRIST without counting the cost. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." (S. John xvi. 20.) So our LORD warned His Apostles, but not without comforting His disciples against tribulation, that with the Psalmist they might learn to sing, "In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, Thy comforts have refreshed my soul." (Ps. xciv. 19.) Now the comforts which come to us from GOD are like all His gifts, real and substantial in their nature, and are intended by Him to produce

permanent effects. We will therefore, before we go further, recall the basis of dogmatic truth upon which they rest, namely, that CHRIST is *in you* the hope of glory. (Col. i. 27.)

CHRIST in us, by virtue of a covenanted union which we were taught to recognise when we first learned the Church Catechism. We have made up our minds that GOD is to be supremely desired for His own sake, but where shall we find Him? Not, O my soul, by reaching forth as the heathen to an unknown GOD, "but in CHRIST," and therefore indwelling the members of CHRIST. O "commune with your own heart and in your chamber, and be still." (Ps. iv. 4.) JESUS patiently waits for thee to recognise His Presence within thee, for by the Will of the FATHER and by the co-operation of the HOLY GHOST in Baptism; by the same Spirit's sevenfold gift outpoured upon us in Confirmation; by the "Holy Mysteries," wherein CHRIST is our "Spiritual Food and Sustenance," He is indeed dwelling in us and we in Him.

Yes, dear brethren, if we be, with whatever imperfections or venial sins, living the life of repentance and faith; if by baptismal innocence preserved, or through penitence restored, we possess habitual grace, then, spite of all that is to be deplored and of all that may cause us to fear, lest we should forfeit so priceless a blessing, we are bound to recognise the truth, that we have not to seek a GOD external to us, but One Who has taken us into union with Himself, and Who, condescending to take upon Him our nature and "to be made like unto us, His brethren," (Heb. ii. 17,) has caused us, who are made partakers of that stainless humanity which He assumed, to become "members of His

Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones." (Eph. v. 30.) Let us, then, observe that a very real comfort is to be derived from the consideration of this as a great objective reality, a truth entirely independent of particular frames of mind.

II.

As, however, GOD is accustomed to encourage the Christian by the gift of spiritual consolation in varying degrees, and at such seasons as He knows to be most fit, let us to-day consider the more sensible comforts of GOD'S Grace, what are their effects upon the soul, the fruits which they are intended to produce, the trial of their absence when the state of desolation is experienced, and lastly, how we may seek their consolations.

S. Ignatius, in his "Spiritual Exercises," observes, upon this subject, that "it is the special attribute and custom of the good Spirit to add courage and strength to those who are acting rightly: to console, to call forth tears of devotion, to enlighten the mind, to give tranquillity, that old obstacles being removed they may more easily and quickly, by good works, ever advance further. That Spiritual consolation is then known to be present when, by a certain internal motion, the mind burns with love towards its Creator, and can love no creature save for His sake; it is known, therefore, when tears are shed provoking that love, whether they flow from grief for sins, or pious meditation upon the Passion of CHRIST, or from any other cause whatsoever which is rightly ordered for the worship and honour of GOD. Lastly, any increase of faith, hope, and charity can be called a consolation; likewise every joy which is wont to incite the mind to meditation

upon heavenly things, to the desire of salvation and to the possession of quiet and peace with the LORD." (Rules of Life, II., III.)

Behind the soul there may seem to be nothing but sin, imperfection, and failure; before her, difficulty, danger, discouragement, and fresh sins; wearied, fainting, tempted to be disheartened, overburdened with sorrows, tempted to seek in earthly and human consolations a refuge from herself, she yet resists and looks to GOD, and He does not hide Himself from her. It may be in meditation upon some mystery of our LORD'S Life on earth, or of His Death for her, or after contrite confession of sins, or at Holy Communion, or at some most unlikely time when she is not in the least looking for anything unusual, often after some arduous work, or some long and apparently fruitless and tiring spiritual exercise; but whether in one of these ways, or in any other way, our Blessed LORD makes Himself known, and all the bitterness is changed, He knoweth how, to sweetness, the benumbing and remorseful dread of the just judgments of GOD passes into an awful reverential fear of the Almighty FATHER, and as a tired child, once wearied with its own self-will, but now sobbing tears of strange joy, and clasped in a mother's arms, falls into a peaceful slumber, so, though worthily deserving to be punished, the soul can gladly exclaim, "I will be glad and rejoice in Thy mercy, for Thou hast considered my trouble and hast known my soul in adversity." (Ps. xxxi. 7.) "O taste and see how gracious the LORD is: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him." (Ps. xxxiv. 8.) And in tranquil restfulness, she knows of Him Who, ruling over men, "is as the light of the morn-

ing when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." (2 Sam. xxiii. 4.) These, and such as these, are the more sensible consolations of GOD'S Grace, when the comfort of that Grace breaks in upon the soul in a time of darkness and of spiritual distress. No one, perhaps, would expect that this elevation of the spiritual nature which accompanies such visitations of Divine Love, as these which are more strictly called consolations, would abide in its felt intensity; there are, however, other forms of the comfort of His Grace, which are not less real in their action upon the soul, though less striking in their phenomena, and when these are vouchsafed, then it is that every religious act is performed with a facility to which at other times we are strangers, unworthy fears pass away and self-love is subdued, whilst the love of GOD seems gently welling up from some hidden fountain within, and we are led instinctively to accompany every operation of the will with ejaculations of desire and of self-oblation, and faith seems, for the time, to be insensibly exercised without effort.

But whether, dear brethren, GOD stir the whole spiritual nature by some awful joy, and draw the soul towards Himself by the strong currents of that love wherewith He has flooded every faculty, and has, at least, for the time, subdued every motion to one harmonious reaching forth to Him, or whether He impart to those He visits a peaceful and refreshing sense of His Presence; whether He come as the "rushing mighty wind," (Acts ii. 2,) or as the gentle air breathing amongst the trees planted by the river of water (Ps. i. 3) and stirring their uplifted boughs so that all the

trees of the wood rejoice before the LORD, (Ps. xcvi. 12;) whether in this way or in that, we may be quite sure that the comfort of GOD's Grace is imparted to us in order that it may work in us the purposes of His Will, that it may promote the progress of our sanctification; not that we may delight ourselves in a transient joy, however pure, but that we may be strengthened to endure and fortified for the contest which yet remains.

Such consolations are as the "South Wind" (Cant. iv. 16) which our LORD bids to "blow upon His garden that the spices thereof may flow forth." How careful, then, should we be to use such gifts aright. GOD has manifested His Presence to us, at such a time we must, in response to His revelation, endeavour to subdue our own too earthly activities and the loquacities of our soul, and, emptying ourselves of all that belongs to self, surrender ourselves to the influx of the Divine Wisdom that we may be taught of GOD. We must endeavour at such times to strengthen, by the intensity of our acts of trust in Him, habits of reliance upon supernatural aid. We should treasure up remembrances of the all-conquering strength of GOD which has been made known to us, that in seasons of depression and of desolation, we may be able to say, it is "mine own infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right Hand of the Most High," for our victory over some future temptations to despair, may largely depend upon this remembrance. And, dear brethren, if any fruit should come of these mercies, surely there should be some increase of holy humility, "LORD, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. viii. 4.) We might well say to Him,

"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O LORD." (S. Luke v. 8—10.) And if He bid us "fear not," yet we shall but be able to escape the paralysis of servile fear by preserving that attitude of lowly, reverential filial fear, which is "the beginning of wisdom," and "the praise" whereof "endureth for ever." (Ps. cxi. 10.) And once more, let us not fail to use the strength which is given to us for a real assault upon our besetting sins.

The desire to be taught of GOD; reliance on supernatural aid; provision against future temptations; self-abasement before GOD; an energetic assault upon our spiritual enemies; these, and such fruits as these, should spring up beneath the influences of the sunshine of GOD'S revealed Presence.

Doubtless, there are dangers against which we ought to be on our guard at such times, arising chiefly from self-love, which is ever ready to poison the holiest joys and to turn the consciousness of spiritual power into the vain elations of self-confidence, and to rob the Christian of his strength, by forgetfulness of what we are, apart from Grace, leading to that presumption as to our perseverance in the favour of GOD, which we considered in the second of these meditations. But, dear brethren, these responsibilities and dangers are all known to GOD, and He will not fail us; let us not then be fearful but confiding, not shrinking from the tokens of His love which He vouchsafes, because it is possible to abuse them, but rather in a humble spirit of brave, courageous trust in Him, whilst marvelling at His condescension and watching against the snares of the enemy and of our own hearts—let us welcome these Visitations of Grace, this "comfort of the HOLY GHOST." (Acts ix. 31.)

III.

And now let us for awhile consider the withdrawal of sensible comfort, when the spiritual life is overshadowed by the sorrows of desolation. It is very needful for us to turn to this subject, for there are many persons who are distressed beyond measure at the loss of consolation, and we all need to be fortified by every possible means which may help us to profit by what is indeed a very real trouble. As when the comfort of the HOLY GHOST is experienced, the soul is upheld by the sense of GOD'S Presence and favour, so in the fading away of the light which once illuminated her path, and in the absence of the sensible tokens of the Divine Love there must be sorrow; but in the first place, let us remember that that in itself is not at all necessarily an evil, for our Blessed LORD was Himself the "Man of Sorrows," (Isa. liii. 3,) and at one time told His Apostles, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," (S. Matt. xxvi. 38,) whilst in particular we know that He endured this greatest sorrow of the temporary withdrawal of the sense of the Divine favour, feeling in His Human Soul so great a desolation, that He cried out from the Cross, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (S. Matt. xxvii. 46.) Indeed, from the "horror of great darkness" which fell upon Abraham, (Gen. xv. 12,) to the sword which pierced the soul of Mary, (S. Luke ii. 35,) the Mother of Him Who was "before Abraham;" from Paul the Apostle, "perplexed but not in despair," (2 Cor. iv. 8,) to the least of the children of GOD to-day: the experience of spiritual sorrows has been the same in kind if very different in degree. They come to us some-

times from our own faults, from lukewarmness or carelessness, worldliness or lack of self-discipline, sometimes from Satan, that he may work in us a distaste for spiritual things; and sometimes, as often in the case of GOD'S more faithful servants, from GOD Himself, that He may humble and prove them by the trial, and may prepare them for a more abundant revelation of Himself when the time of desolation shall, like some bitter medicine, have wrought its purpose in them. Many a faithful Christian has been this way before, and some have recorded their experience, let us endeavour to profit by their testimony, and not exclaim as though some strange thing had happened to us, if at times we have to say, "I sought Him Whom my soul loveth; I sought Him, but I found Him not." (Cant. iii. 1.)

Now with respect to those spiritual sorrows which come to us from the first of the three causes just referred to, we may derive much comfort from considering that it is indeed a much better thing to be aroused to fear for ourselves than that we should be suffered to become colder and colder, less and less detached from the lower life, more and more taken up with what is not of GOD, and yet all the while to be unaware of it! That He is a more merciful GOD and FATHER than to smile upon us when we are ruining our souls, and, perhaps, drifting farther and farther, even from what we once were, and in imminent danger of sin unto death, through the increasing languor of our soul's life: desolation to such an one is perhaps just the one thing which will induce a wholesome alarm to drive the lukewarm to seek GOD in a sterner self-discipline and in a more thorough repentance. For the trial which comes to us through the

machinations of Satan, bringing upon us the darkness of perplexity of mind, of hindrances in prayer, of delusions, of temptations to unbelief, to ease or sensuality, we may reflect that such assaults are a proof that the enemy of souls is vexed at what is going on within us; and is that, dear brethren, a bad sign? Whilst for those desolations which come from GOD, apart from His chastisements for some negligence on the part of any, they clearly are to be regarded as special tokens of His gracious goodness towards such as experience them, for He hath said by the Prophet Zechariah, "I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried; they shall call on My Name and I will hear them; I will say, It is My people, and they shall say, The LORD is my GOD." (Zech. xiii. 9.) "For whom the LORD loveth He correcteth." (Prov. iii. 12.) And from such discipline cometh the knowledge of Divine things, as the Psalmist says, "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn Thy statutes." (Ps. cxix. 71.) Above all things, however, let us constantly revert to the contemplation of the interior sorrows of JESUS CHRIST: to read on our knees the twenty-second Psalm, in which He has, by the HOLY GHOST, revealed to us something of their awful mystery, should indeed be enough to quell every motion of impatience. "Our fathers hoped in Thee, they trusted in Thee, and Thou didst deliver them; they called upon Thee and were holpen; they put their trust in Thee, and were not confounded; but as for Me, I am a worm and no man!" (Ps. xxii. 4—6.)

Let us then, at such times, bear in mind that we must on no account yield to those temptations of Satan, or of our

own corrupt dispositions which would lead us to abandon anything previously undertaken under the impulse of Divine charity, but that, on the contrary, however much it may be opposed to our inclination whilst we are so deprived of consolation, we must strive with increased diligence to be conformed to the Will of GOD, in every particular of our daily life, by careful regularity, punctuality, and exactness in the performance of every duty, and endeavouring to live in the spirit of the Psalmist's words, "I have thought upon Thy Name, O LORD, in the *night-season*, and have kept Thy Law." (Ps. cxix. 55.)

IV.

Let us, in conclusion, suggest a few considerations upon the seeking of Spiritual Consolation from GOD. S. Bernard, in a sermon on Titus iii. 4, very beautifully exhorts his brethren never to forget that they are strangers and pilgrims here, and then proceeds to affirm that whoever knows not what it is to experience desolation cannot experience consolation, that he who denies the necessity of consolation must lack the Grace of GOD. "Thence it is (he says) that men of the world, entangled in its affairs and sinful pleasures, whilst they are unaware of their own misery, have no regard for the compassion of GOD." And then, addressing the brethren, he proceeds: "Ye, however, to whom it is not said in vain, 'Be at leisure, and see how gracious the LORD is,' and concerning whom the same Prophet saith, 'He shall show His people the power of His works;' ye, I say, whom no secular occupation detains, hear of what sort is this spiritual consolation, ye who are not ignorant

of your exile, hear how help has come down from heaven since 'the kindness and humanity of GOD our SAVIOUR hath appeared.'"[1]

This saying affords a key to the whole question which we are considering, for the Saint puts clearly before us the truth that GOD gives spiritual consolations just in proportion as we desire them above all others and set others aside. We must not, however, seek them except in submission to GOD's Will and not for the sake of their sweetness, but that we may be enabled the better to serve Him. So seeking we shall surely obtain. It is too by such acts, as involve the union of mortifications with prayer, that GOD is to be sought, and very often the greatest hindrance to spiritual joy is to be found in our self-indulgent ways, our over-care for bodily health or ease. Jacob, indeed, who wrestled all night in prayer halted on his thigh, but he had obtained the glorious dignity which belonged to the "Prince of GOD." Daniel declares, that when he beheld the great Vision, anticipatory

[1] "Super his namque sæpius vos admonere curamus, ut nunquam mente excidat peregrinos nos esse, longe factos a patriâ, pulsos hereditate. Quisquis enim desolationem non novit nec consolationem agnoscere potest. Quisquis consolationem ignorat esse necessariam, superest ut non habeat Dei gratiam. Inde est quod homines sæculi, negotiis et flagitiis implicati, dum miseriam non sentiunt, non attendunt misericordiam. Vos quibus non frustra dictum est, 'vacate et videte quoniam suavis est Dominus,' et de quibus idem Propheta, 'virtutem,' inquit, 'operum suorum annuntiabit populo suo,' vos inquam, quos non detinet occupatio secularis, attendite quænam sit consolatio spiritualis. Vos qui non ignoratis exilium audite quia de cœlo venit auxilium. 'Apparuit' enim 'benignitas et humanitas Salvatoris nostri Dei.'"—(*S. Bernard in Epiph. Sermo I.*)

of the glory of our Ascended LORD, he lost all his bodily strength, and that his vigour was turned in him into corruption, but he was touched by a heavenly hand, and was consoled by most gracious communications. S. John the Divine, when he beheld in like form that same LORD, now verily ascended, fell at His Feet, and became as one dead; yet, as JESUS laid His right Hand upon the Beloved Disciple, and bade him fear not, who may tell the blessedness which was his through annihilation of the flesh?

"Watchman, what of the night? The watchman saith, The morning cometh, and also the night." (Isa. xxi. 11, 12.) Yes, the morning of consolation, of the comforts of GOD'S Grace, but also the night of deepening shadows, of advancing crucifixion, of Satanic malice, the devil working whilst he may, "having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time;" (Rev. xii. 12;) but He Who is the everlasting Light leads on, so let us pray,

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on;
Hold Thou my steps, I do not ask to see
The distant scene, one step enough for me!"

So let us, dear brethren, strive to fulfil our first simple Lenten resolution, and, whether left for a time in desolation or cheered by consolation, let us press on to take that next step on the heavenward course, which we shall, by GOD'S mercy, always have light enough to see and strength enough to tread. And thus, sooner or later, be it sooner or be it

later, in His own way, and at His own best time, we, "who for our evil deeds, do worthily deserve to be punished, by the Comfort of His Grace shall mercifully be relieved" of all that now oppresses us, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD; to Whom with the FATHER and the HOLY GHOST, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

Fifth Sunday in Lent.

(PASSION SUNDAY.)

DISCIPLINE.

"Governed and preserved evermore."—*Collect.*

THE Consolations which GOD gives to His people He vouchsafes to them in order that they may know how utterly to be despised in comparison with the least of these His favours is all that the world, the flesh, and the devil can offer to us; these condescensions of Almighty GOD reveal to us that which is altogether hidden from our merely natural understanding, and, amazing and humbling though they must ever be to us, they should be joyfully recognised as tokens of His love for our souls and of His desire to win us to Himself, that forsaking all else we may learn to find in Him more than all that we can ask or think.

I.

"Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, LORD, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? JESUS answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My FATHER will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with

him." (S. John xiv. 22, 23.) It is by these secret manifestations of GOD's Presence that we are taught to realise the intense personal and loving interest which JESUS CHRIST takes in our lives, the particularity of the operations of His Grace, and are encouraged with filial confidence to cry, "Abba, FATHER!" (Gal. iv. 6.) Now since these manifestations are ours, in proportion to our self-abasement before Him, (Conf. Isa. lvii. 15,) we find that the measure of our capacity for receiving the comfort of His Grace is the measure of our submission to the *penitential* discipline of this life; and as there is any growth in the knowledge and love of GOD this condition of being in His favour becomes increasingly recognised as amounting to a distinct law of His dealings with us. Moreover as the pursuit of that which once appeared to be worthy of our desires is seen to be folly, and the will seeks to surrender itself wholly to GOD, He allures us by the visitations of His Grace and kindles in us a love to Himself which if we be faithful to His leadings must in the end *consume* all that is earthly in us, prompting us to put away all that now hinders His entire possession of our souls; so that the love of GOD, as it draws us nearer to Him, with jealous urgency bids us more truly "crucify the old man and utterly abolish the whole body of sin." (The Thanksgiving, Office for Holy Baptism.) And thus, dear brethren, just so far as any has realised the claims of the Divine Charity he has also learned the need of living a *mortified life*, yea, that unless he perseveres unto the end in his endeavour to be conformed unto the likeness of His death Who died that we might live, GOD must withdraw Himself from the

soul which has dared to think that whilst JESUS was hated of the world we may yet share its friendship,—that friendship which is declared by an Apostle to be "enmity with GOD," (S. James iv. 4;) that though S. Paul might buffet his body and bring it into subjection, (1 Cor. ix. 27,) though saints and penitents in all ages have disciplined the flesh by abstinence and hard usage, we may nevertheless be excused by custom or on the plea of some infirmity which rarely impedes anything to which self-will or pleasure stimulates; that although we are assured in Holy Scripture that our combat is against "the wiles of the devil, against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. vi. 11, 12,) that nevertheless actual contest with evil spirits is not to be anticipated, and that the notion of suffering beneath their assaults is to be relegated to the list of bygone superstitions. But let us not be deceived, for the truth of GOD is unchanging, and it is as true to-day as it was eighteen hundred years ago that "as ye are partakers of the sufferings so shall ye be also of the consolation." (2 Cor. i. 7.) If we shrink from mortification, interior and exterior, GOD must withdraw the comfort of His Grace.

There is indeed a lying though plausible substitute for the Gospel which Satan and the world have combined to forge, and which the flesh is but too ready to accept. It is, in brief, that CHRIST lived here a toilsome, sorrowful, and weary life, and died a shameful death, that we might come to life eternal, not as He taught by losing our life for His sake, (S. Matt. xvi. 25,) and by knowing "the fellowship of His sufferings," (Phil. iii. 10,) that thus by the merits

of His most Holy Death and Passion we might be brought to the glory of His resurrection; but rather that by virtue of the Cross of CHRIST we are to account ourselves relieved from bearing any other burden than that which unavoidably comes upon us, as upon all men, in the present economy of the world; which teaches us that we may seek the alleviations of every earthly comfort which we can honestly procure, even though for our sins we should have been long since condemned to eternal banishment from GOD had it not been for His measureless patience. And that we are excused from considering what manner of life may be becoming in those who profess sorrow for sin, or whether there may not be even for ourselves some part in filling up "that which is behind of the afflictions of CHRIST" "for His Body's sake, which is the Church." (Col. i. 24.)

Passiontide, dear brethren, calls us to a truer life. Before your eyes JESUS CHRIST is now the more "evidently set forth crucified among you." (Gal. iii. 1.) And as in the collect we pray that "we may be governed and preserved evermore both in body and soul," so in the ancient office hymn we raise our supplication—

> "Whom by the Cross Thou didst restore
> Preserve and govern evermore."

And whence was it that His Kingly Authority was first blazoned before all the world, in letters of Greek and Latin, and Hebrew? (S. Luke xxiii. 38.) Whence but from the Tree of Shame when they "set up over His Head His accusation written, This is JESUS, the King of the Jews." (S. Matt. xxvii. 37.)

II.

Meditate then upon the character of His Discipline as He rules with the rod of the Holy Cross, and only as so ruling, comforts. "Thy rod and Thy staff comfort me." (Ps. xxiii. 4.) Ah, that Cross, the glory of the Church in the age of the martyrs, and now the strength of all true Christian heroism, the hope and refuge of every true penitent soul. How did the very name kindle an enthusiasm in the heart of those who flocked to its standard in the holy wars, how readily did those multitudes submit themselves to martial obedience in the ranks of Christian warriors who went forth to rescue the holy city and win back from the profane custody of the Moslem hosts the Sepulchre of CHRIST! But what success they had was brief,—Jerusalem is to-day in the possession of the unbelievers, and the Holy Wars left perhaps as their most enduring legacy an intensified alienation of Catholic Christians in the East from their brethren in the West through the bitter memories of violence endured at Christian hands, and the usurpation of their ancient and Apostolic thrones by Western prelates. Alas! it is easier to follow a standard, to join a host, to belong to a religious movement, than to wear the Cross indeed on the heart and to have the heart on the Cross, easier far to seek some outward advantage for the Church, the destruction of some scandal, the overthrow of some form of anti-Christian oppression, than to be conformed to the likeness of the Crucified. In the Crusades the sinful lives of many we may well suppose frustrated the holy purposes of the few who with a single eye to GOD'S honour,

and a true love for their LORD, left all to follow the holy sign. GOD forbid that the history of their strife should find its reflection in experiences of to-day! Yes, GOD forbid! for to-day again the Christian people are called to wage a Holy War, a true Crusade. It is no empty sepulchre, however sacred, but the very Body and Blood of CHRIST present in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar in defence of which we must be prepared, if need be, to suffer the loss of all things. Shall we succeed or fail? Oh, if *we* fail in this strife, thank GOD the issue is not uncertain, unworthy and unfaithful we must be set aside, only that others may know the joy of that victory which we might have known but for the lack of a crucified life. Yes, to-day JESUS raises the Holy, the Royal, Standard of His Cross once more,—once more

"The Royal Banners forward go,
The Cross shines forth in mystic glow,
Where He in Flesh our flesh Who made
Our sentence bore, our ransom paid:

"Where deep for us the spear was dyed,
Life's torrent rushing from His Side,
To wash us in that precious flood
Where mingled Water flowed and Blood.

* * * *

"O tree of beauty, tree of light:
O tree with royal purple dight,
Elect on whose triumphal breast
Those holy limbs should find their rest."

Vesper Hymn for Passiontide.

Who so cold as not to kindle into something of devotion

as he joins the glorious song! Behold, then, the Cross, dear brethren, as it stood, yea, as it stands now, ever raised in the presence of the hosts of CHRIST'S Church militant! Behold it, gaze upon it, ye who are the soldiers and servants of Him Who died thereon, but as your hearts beat high with love, and you are filled with ardent desire to go forth beneath that sign to victory, O seek to become increasingly faithful to its token marked upon your brow in Holy Baptism, and forget not that you are more than His servants, being the very members of that Sacred Body once pierced by nails, and spear, and crown of thorns, for as we remember this, the Rod of GOD'S discipline is found to be of the Wood of the Tree, and "Blessed is the Wood whereby righteousness cometh." (Wisd. xiv. 7.)

Let us, then, consider, dear brethren, how much as Christian men and women we owe to those things from which we naturally shrink, and praise the merciful severity of JESUS! Yet how sweetly He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (S. Matt. xi. 28.) Yea, rest and peace, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," but "Not as the world giveth give I unto you." (S. John xiv. 27.) Rest, indeed, but only as thou learnest what that meaneth, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." (S. Matt. xi. 29.) Ah, it is by converting our mere sorrows into crosses, by virtue of His own, that JESUS takes from them their baneful bitterness, and makes them to be to us for healing and not for destruction. And what a change is this! Nothing less than the change from that "sorrow of

the world" which "worketh death," to that "godly sorrow" which "worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." (2 Cor. vii. 10.)

III.

There are sorrows in all conditions of our earthly life, bereavements, sicknesses, disappointments, vexations, estrangements, loss of position or of property: in a thousand forms we are made to experience the truth of the Scriptures, "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." (Job v. 7.) But to-day we will set aside all these, as common to those who are of the world as well as to those who endeavour to be true to their character as children of GOD, and we will contemplate some trials peculiar to the spiritual life in one or other of its phases.

It is our happy lot to be communicants: let us consider how the sorrows and trials which assail us even in our approaches to GOD's Altar may become changed into crosses. And first, then, one desiring to receive the Body and Blood of CHRIST, must "examine himself," and so "eat of that Bread and drink of that cup;" our preparation must be a humbling preparation, one of confession of sin and acknowledgment of unworthiness, and we may have to encounter temptations to dejection and despondency arising from disappointment at our slow progress in spirituality, but JESUS calls us to Himself, and by the power of His Cross mere dejection passes into such a deepened sense of our own insufficiency and of dependence upon GOD as He alone can give, and which He ever blesses with yet further gifts.

And then hopeful anticipations spring up beneath the

dews of absolving grace, anticipations to be surely fulfilled; but nevertheless, as we pass on to the more immediate preparation, fresh trials await us, for circumstances often seem to conspire together to mar that calm converse with GOD which the soul seeks, something perhaps occurs to shorten the time which we meant to reserve for prayer before the Celebration of the Blessed Sacrament, and in saying the office there is a sense of hurry. Or it may be that a coldness of heart comes upon us, or we suffer from some want of holy liberty, and are distracted by some dishonouring pettiness in prayer, or some bodily infirmity asserts itself, the weakness and incapacity of our whole nature oppress us, and in divers ways Satan hinders us, the powers of darkness oppose us, the chastisements of forgiven sins are upon us. Are not such things as these, dear brethren, the experience of those who are striving to prepare their hearts to seek the LORD? Ah, yes, but JESUS stretches forth His Rod and touches all, and the sorrow is changed to a cross, and "Blessed is the Wood whereby righteousness cometh."

Think, then, when such things befall you, of your own Blessed SAVIOUR as regarding you in this, and accept it, asking pardon indeed, lest some hidden fault be mingled with infirmity and temptation, but accepting it simply, having brought it before Him by an act of self-manifestation to Him, and thus be well assured that you will be making a better preparation for Holy Communion than if the office and prayers had been said with the least possible distraction and with the utmost freedom from external interruptions.

And then, too, as the Liturgy itself proceeds, how apt we

are to feel that we wished we had more time, that the service would delay its course, that we might the better gather up every faculty of our being for that act of intense adoration wherewith we would welcome "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," (Rev. xiii. 8), now to be present upon His Altar Throne. But the prayer of Consecration is already being said, and in a moment we are lifted up into a participation in that wondrous worship which John the Apostle beheld in the Heavenly Courts. So mighty a mystery, so brief a time! and as we endeavour to realise this, and to offer our adoration to Him, the time has come when we should approach to receive the Body and Blood of CHRIST; we leave our place and "draw nigh with faith," and the greatest marvel of GOD'S love is transacted once more, as the sinner and the SAVIOUR are one in Holy Communion.

Oh, why should not this be our abiding state? why need we so soon go forth, so soon be forced to minister to the wants of this poor body, to mingle with men, to be engaged in conversation, to be where we have, alas! too often found ourselves, so unlike what we promised JESUS we would be? But JESUS CHRIST touches all, and speaks to us such words as these: "Dear child, thy very sorrows argue longings for a better land, where the Manna of the Sacramental feeding shall cease, for there thou shalt no longer wander in a wilderness, but be satiated unceasingly with the fulness of Myself, and rapt into a joy that never shade of sorrow dims, where no sense of want of time will vex thee, for that temporal accidents shall be no more: give Me thy griefs." And so He turns them to a Cross, and we find our hearts

longing for the Heavenly Home and for that timeless eternity which GOD Himself is. Yea, "Blessed is the Wood whereby righteousness cometh."

Or, consider now, dear brethren, another form of the discipline which belongs to the Spiritual Life, a trial at times of religious revival very frequent. We will suppose a member of a family to have been enabled, by GOD'S mercy, to accept and to act upon some truth which others of the household have not received, and against which they are deeply prejudiced; though it is as clear as daylight to him, by the grace of GOD'S illuminating Spirit teaching him through the Church, and enabling him to receive the Word of GOD with "pure affection" to the health of his soul, yet to them it is not so.

For example, we will suppose that that which has been to countless thousands the centre of their devotional life, the truth concerning the Holy Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Altar, is regarded by the kinsfolk of such a person as a superstitious figment, very likely from some entire misapprehension of the teaching of the Church, but a misapprehension which he could never remove were he to discuss the question with them, and to adduce the most overwhelming proofs of the catholicity and antiquity of the Faith which he holds. Such an one has to be true to GOD, and yet at the same time that he maintains a firm and faithful adherence to the truths revealed to him, he has often to bear in mind that even spiritual privileges are to be foregone that the Divine law of charity may be kept, to cultivate a spirit of large consideration for others, and to remember that if GOD bears with his own blindness, he may well exercise patience

towards those about him. But with all this it must often be a heavy trial to have to go to GOD'S Altar knowing that his very struggles to draw nearer to his SAVIOUR are regarded with suspicious dislike, and that censorious judgments are passed upon him, or even that through evil surmises arising from a spirit of distrust, his whole conduct may be entirely misconstrued; he would be tempted to draw back or to yield when to do so were weakness and unfaithfulness, not charity; but that JESUS CHRIST can turn this trial also into a cross, and from its bitterness bring forth the sweetness of a closer intercourse with Himself, proportioned to the detachment from human sympathy which such a discipline is intended to bring with it. He will teach such an one to receive as a penance for other sins the reproach of CHRIST thus cast upon him undeservedly, when most earnestly, though with many imperfections, seeking Him, and will so preserve to His servant by these salutary humiliations that meekness without which no discipline can be rightly and profitably received at GOD'S hand.

Or, again, consider the discipline which comes to us from our own infirmities. In our intercourse with others how often, when we are most watchful to preserve recollection and to be in converse with GOD, by some infirmity of manner, some awkwardness in using the abundance of GOD'S grace given unto us in CHRIST, we unwittingly offend our neighbour, and finding this out afterwards are greatly pained that we should have so failed just when we really were setting our hearts wholly upon Him; but as JESUS CHRIST touches this sorrow also with His Cross it becomes unto us a wholesome medicine forti-

fying us against any infusion of self-love by the abjection of ourselves as we acknowledge before GOD the hindrances which our corruptions, blindnesses, and ignorances, and negligences present to the flowing forth of the gift which He has given to us.

And, once more, let us consider that as the discipline of the Cross touches us even in the time of our closest intercourse with GOD in Holy Communion, and in our spiritual relations with others, so does it also especially in our learning to know Him more and more in the struggles of the interior life of the communicant.

O awful blessedness to know, not *about* GOD, but GOD Himself in CHRIST! O what an amazing paradox is a soul to herself! How often she knows not whither she goes when she yields herself to some fresh attraction of GOD's love, to what fresh suffering He is inviting her as she endeavours to appropriate that further revelation of Himself which He desires to unfold to her, but which she cannot receive unless she be prepared to go through some more severe chastisement than she has yet known. The chastisement comes, but it must be accepted in the spirit of conformity to the Cross, or its fruit will never be hers. "We went through fire and water, and Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place," (Ps. lxvi. 12;) but unless we keep near to Him Who has promised "when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee," (Isa. xliii. 2,) we shall never reach the "wealthy place," but shall shrink back over-

whelmed with the disclosure of our own poverty, falling from misery to misery, for that we have not brought our woes to be healed, nor known the touch of "the Wood whereby righteousness cometh."

The world says of her own joys that there is "no rose without a thorn," and she might say much more, for the roses of this life, however fair and fragrant they may be, soon wither, and at best drop petal by petal to the ground; how often are they abruptly swept away by some rough blast! yes, the rose is gone, but the thorn remains —perhaps to rankle in the flesh of him who plucked it.

The Church says, too, of her joys, no rose without a thorn, but the thorns of the Spiritual Life are from CHRIST'S blessed Thorny Crown and turn to chaplets of unfading bloom. Whilst then our sinful affections would prompt us to cry, "Let no flower of the spring pass by us; let us crown ourselves with rosebuds, before they be withered;" (Wisd. ii. 7, 8;) let us rather, by GOD'S Grace, desire some share in the crown of suffering, that we may not be without a portion in the glory of our Head Who was once crowned with thorns, but now wears the "many crowns" in the kingdom of His FATHER.

"Daughters of Zion, royal maids,
Come forth to see the Crown
Which Zion's self, with cruel hands,
Hath woven for her Son.

"See how amid His gory locks
The jagged thorns appear,
See how His pallid countenance
Foretells that death is near!

"O savage was the earth that bore
Those thorns so sharp and long;
O savage hands that gathered them
To work this deadly wrong!

"But now that CHRIST's immortal Blood
Hath tinged them with Its dye,
Fairer than roses they appear
Or palms of victory.

"JESU, the thorns that pierced Thy Brow
Sprang from the seeds of sin;
Pluck ours, we pray Thee, from our hearts
And plant Thine own therein."

So then, dear brethren, let us learn thankfully to accept those mortifications which are galling to our self-love and impatient pride, and to feel quite sure that as we do yield ourselves to Him in trustful submission we shall be able to say, "Thou hast given me the defence of Thy salvation, Thy right hand also shall hold me up, and Thy loving correction shall make me great." (Ps. xviii. 35.) And so if the Hand that smites us be firm, the Hand that sustains us is the same, and that "the good Hand of my GOD." (Neh. ii. 8.) Let us ever remember the unerring wisdom which administers that corrective discipline which is needful for us and apportions to each the Cross which is best adapted to further his sanctification, so that all we have to do, really, is to set aside all fretful complaints and to go bravely on, surrendering ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to GOD, that we may be "governed and preserved evermore"—yes, evermore, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD—here, indeed, by the discipline of the Cross "for a season;" but when this

short life of probation is over, "evermore" abidingly in the Kingdom of His Glory; then shall the LORD GOD wipe away all tears from off all faces, and then shall it be known how "wonderfully indeed the eye, once dim, is cleansed by tears and the vision rendered keen that it may be able to gaze upon the splendour of that most peaceful light,"[1] which He Himself is, to Whom, FATHER, SON and HOLY GHOST, be all honour and glory for ever. Amen.

[1] "Nimirum purgatur lachrymis oculus ante caligans et acuitur visus, ut intendere possit in serenissimi luminis claritatem."—*S. Bernard, de Conversione*, cap. xi.

The Sunday next before Easter.

(PALM SUNDAY.)

VICTORY THROUGH PATIENCE.

"Grant that we may follow the example of His Patience."—*Collect.*

HAVING already, in our previous meditations, considered the Spiritual Life, its Nature and Aims; its Weakness and Strength; its Desires; and its Consolations; we last week proceeded to consider the Cross as the principle of the Divine rule in the discipline of life. To-day it remains for us to consider the victory which is assured to those who submitting to the condition of this discipline follow the example of CHRIST'S Patience; for GOD shall surely "render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, Eternal Life." (Rom. ii. 6, 7.) Yes, indeed it is this, and nothing less than this, which is to be the result of discipline accepted at GOD'S Hand in trustful love by him who perseveres unto the end.

I.

Let us then meditate to-day upon this victory through patience. Patience! How needful for us it must be carefully to cultivate this fruit of the HOLY GHOST in such times

as these in which our lot is cast, when so often meekness, gentleness, and calm endeavour are set aside in favour of self-will, passion, or the impetuosities of shallowness; when results are looked for before the former and the latter rain have done their work, when we have need to listen to the admonition of the Apostle, "Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the LORD draweth nigh." (S. James v. 7, 8.)

And first of all, dear brethren, before we pursue our meditation, let us endeavour to determine with something of definiteness what we are to understand by Patience in the Spiritual Life. There are, then, two words used in the New Testament, both of which are rendered in our English version by this word patience; the one (μακροθυμία) denoting especially the restraint of passion which belongs to this virtue, the other (ὑπομονή) the persevering sustaining of the burden which is laid upon him who is called upon to exercise it: the former has been thought to refer more particularly to Patience as exhibited towards persons, the latter to its manifestations under circumstances of distress and trial; he is patient in this former sense who "having to do with injurious persons does not suffer himself to be easily provoked by them or to blaze up into anger. He is patient in the latter sense who under a great siege of trials bears up and does not lose heart or courage." (Archbishop Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament, § liii.) Or, as another has said, it is "the virtue of the man who tenacious of the end which he has proposed to himself is neither turned

aside from his course nor seduced from his faith and pious life by the greatest calamities and vexations."

But though they may be thus discriminated these two forms of patience are essentially allied, and are often called into exercise at the same time; the circumstances in which the one is shown being brought about by persons towards whom there is need of exhibiting the other.

Eminently was this the case with regard to our Blessed LORD. Patient towards those who inflicted upon Him many forms of suffering; His human will was also "tenacious of the end which He had proposed to Himself" in spite of direst afflictions, and that end was as we know the fulfilment of the FATHER'S Will.

II.

Such then being the Patience through which victory is to be attained, let us now consider the Patience of our LORD as seen in—

(1) His hidden life on earth.
(2) His labours.
(3) And lastly, in His Passion and Death.

The Patience of the hidden life of the Son of Mary. Meditate, dear brethren, upon the sacred Human Soul of JESUS, the Holy Babe, illuminated with the perfection of wisdom in potentiality; knowing, by virtue of the hypostatic union, all the miseries and needs of men. See the Babe of Bethlehem as He lies in the manger cradle, the swathing bands wrapped closely about Him; behold Him sharing for us all the annihilation of helpless infancy, the LORD of Glory subject to all the feebleness and needing the

human ministries which belong to the tenderness of the first years of earliest childhood; and the while enter in what sort thou mayest by the ardour of a heart inflamed with something of His own Divine charity into the mystery of that Sacred Heart of JESUS beating beneath the Baby Breast of Him Who is the everlasting GOD!

Fathom as thou art able the Love unutterable wherewith He is wholly sacrificed for thee, and in what degree thou canst attain to know something of that love, know too the Holy Patience of thy SAVIOUR CHRIST, Who knowing thus the sorrows, sins, and needs of men with perfect knowledge, loving the souls of men with perfect love, lies still, content to await the predestined time.

O what was the Patience of JESUS CHRIST! The Love of JESUS is the measure of His Patience, and as thou knowest that, thou shalt be able to read its mighty victory.

O Thou, Who loving us, and knowing all our defilements, didst earnestly desire to die for our salvation; O Thou, Who wast inflamed with the all-consuming desire openly to glorify Thy FATHER'S Name, yet when Thou tookest upon Thee to deliver man didst not abhor the Virgin's womb, teach us with all Thy Church to fall in adoring wonder at Thy feet, and learn to follow the example of Thy patient love! By the mystery of Thy Holy Incarnation, by Thy Holy Nativity and Circumcision, by the mystery of Thy Holy Infancy and Childhood, Good LORD, deliver us!

Consider, dear brethren, for how long a time JESUS was content to be thus hidden, thus restrained, and let us find herein a remedy for all impatient movements of the soul.

The Soul of JESUS even in the perfect illumination which it possessed was nevertheless content to grow in the experimental knowledge of the spiritual life, thus increasing in wisdom, and do we well to be impatient because we are kept waiting for anything which we seek at the Hands of GOD? Does it seem more than we can endure to find the weeks go by and to feel the swathing-bands of much spiritual feebleness about us still? Children of GOD, foreknown, predestined, called and justified, ay, in some sense already, sanctified and glorified, are ye all this yet still bound by swathing-bands, restrained by feebleness? Behold the Babe! behold the Holy Child! The world hates and scorns such abjections, and hurries by, and the impatient Christian, his hope deferred and his heart sick, is ready to turn sadly away when JESUS is sweetly bidding him become even "as this little Child," (S. Matt. xviii. 4,) and to rejoice if in any way he be called to "wait still upon GOD."

And is love eager to be doing, and does it seem hard to be kept back? Yes, it were very hard, but let us remember that He never restrains us from aught that is worthy of a strong and holy love of GOD, we have need to humble ourselves for our sinful unlove and to ask to be made "fit to love," but if it should please Him that we should die without doing one thing which should actually testify our devotion to His Will, or that to the end we should be kept in this infancy of soul so far as external experimental knowledge is concerned, even then would there not be vouchsafed to us in both these providences a special likeness to JESUS in the Patience of His Infancy? Yes, indeed, dear brethren, we know that nothing can keep us from the oblation of our-

selves in those acts of the will which alone give value to any outward action, those acts by which each moment the Infant SAVIOUR offered Himself a sacrifice to the Heavenly FATHER. So holding herself in readiness to act when it shall please GOD, the soul which is united to JESUS gains an implicit knowledge of GOD'S ways through the contemplation of Himself, and with little of external acquaintance with many things, receives an illumination, in some degree imaging that which made radiant with Divine communications the human soul of the Infant JESUS.

Consider next the Patience of JESUS in toil, in pressure of outward circumstances and in reproach.

We read in the Evangelists that when our LORD had chosen His Apostles, "They went into an house. And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. And when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself." (S. Mark iii. 19—21.) And on another occasion when He had declared Himself to be "the Good Shepherd" Who "giveth His life for the sheep," and that He had power both to lay down that life and to take it again, together with many other holy mysteries; there were many who said, "He hath a devil, and is mad, why hear ye Him?" (S. John x. 20,) and yet He murmured not.

Or recall that terrible scene in the synagogue at Nazareth, that city where He had been brought up. Hear Him as He reads the words of the Evangelical Prophet, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives,

and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD." Behold Him as closing the book, and giving it again to the minister, He sits down to expound what He has read, and announces to them the fulfilment of the inspired words, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." The eyes of all them that are in the synagogue are fastened upon Him, they cannot but bear Him witness and wonder at the gracious words which proceed out of His mouth. But alas, for how short a time do they yield themselves in any degree to the holy influence of those words! their exclamation, Is not this Joseph's Son? reveals how soon they find excuse to scorn and to reject Him, and as His teaching, as He proceeds, wounds the sensitiveness of their national prejudices, their hearts which for a moment seemed softening beneath those gracious words recoil in all the coldness of unbelief, the bitterness of pride, the hardness of impenitence. A movement of impatient anger stirs the crowd, for all they in the synagogue when they hear these things are filled with wrath; and now their passionate resentment waxing hotter and hotter bursts forth into ungoverned rage as they rise up to lay violent hands upon JESUS! Mark them as they come about Him yielding themselves up to the hate which Satan stirs within them to a diabolical frenzy. See that crowd of sinful men, the population of notoriously wicked Nazareth, as they press upon Him and thrusting Him from His seat hurry Him out of the synagogue, and sweeping on in their foulness carry away the Anointed of GOD, as on some turbid swollen stream, on through the streets of the city where so often

He had been seen of them when He lived His life of boyhood, and after of retired obedient laborious youth and manhood and of ministry to His Beloved widowed mother—on, still on, beyond the gates to the slope which rises on every side about the hill-built city—still on, in one horrid rush of impetuous haste surrendered to their passion and panting beneath its urgent impulses to destroy Him, until they reach one of the many precipitous descents which bound the slope, that from the height they may hurl Him to the plain beneath and silence for ever the Voice of His testimony! . . . .

"But He passing through the midst of them, *went His way*." So let us, dear brethren, turn from this awful turmoil of impatient men and look once more upon the Divine LORD Himself. How calm amidst it all is He Who, "by one rough word," could have swept that godless crew away into utter destruction. He spares all and simply withdraws Himself from them. (S. Luke iv. 16—30.)

And once again behold our LORD and Master as He sits by Jacob's well in the noontide heat, "wearied with His journey" and an hungered. Recall His conversation with the poor woman of Samaria and consider His patience towards her. Note how He just sets aside the question which she raises, not however without telling her the truth as to the heretical and schismatical people to whom she belonged, but pointing onwards with words which must have brought home to her the sense of the need of a purified life. He declares the character of that worship which the FATHER desired to receive from mankind. What a sweet dignity is there in the calm patience of JESUS! He is

wearied and fasting, but we find in Him no petulant or needless severity in rebuke, nor any shrinking from encountering this poor soul's difficulties and spiritual blindness and deformities. All is done in gentle firmness in the faithful patience which triumphs over bodily fatigue. The disciples return and pray Him, "Master, eat," but He will wait. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His Work." (S. John iv. 5—34.) No circumstances of overwhelming labour arising from the necessities of the multitudes who claim His ministry for their souls or bodies; no harshness of uncharity, no scornful words nor murderous malignity of unbelieving Capernaum, no bodily fatigue or hunger could mar the Holy Patience of JESUS CHRIST.

And O, dear brethren, let us see to it, that in our interior life we do, in some degree, mirror forth the image of this perfection. Are any harassed with the concurrence of a multitude of external cares or of those who claim their attention, let them in patience possess their souls. Should it please GOD that at any time they should be hurried on in outward labours, or that one process of internal discipline should succeed another, should they be emptied from vessel to vessel, taken from one place, where they had begun to build their nest, to another; nevertheless, in all these things let them rejoice thus to follow Him, seeking but His Grace, that they may be enabled faithfully to follow the example of His Patience—if misunderstood, slandered, or hated, still let their hearts be lifted up to Him Who, for us sinners, Himself the sinless One, endured the like, so shall they, in

union with their LORD, "pass from" those who are their assailants.

He withdrew Himself only because His hour was not yet come and that the Scripture might be fulfilled by His Crucifixion, not in order to shrink from suffering but only to live on, hated more and more, until that hour of His most bitter Passion should at length be reached. He withdrew Himself, not that He might suffer less, but rather that He might bear the more and die a more prolonged and shameful death, and if we cannot escape assault by an exterior withdrawal we may yet be hidden in the inner sanctuary of the love of JESUS. "Thou shalt hide them privily by Thine own presence from the provoking of all men; Thou shalt keep them secretly in Thy Tabernacle from the strife of tongues." (Ps. xxxi. 22.) Or are you in bodily weariness and fasting? still endeavour to preserve the same holy patience; yes, even in *spiritual* languor and emptiness of soul, you may sometimes find it for GOD'S greater glory, not at once to seek relief by receiving at the hands of the apostolic Priesthood even that Food which now the disciples distribute to the multitude, but rather drawing from that Well of Life which CHRIST has already made our own, by Grace, to give freely of the Water of Life to some poor thirsting sinful soul. The well may be deep, and ye may seem to have nothing to draw with, nothing either of bodily or mental sufficiency, but in the setting aside of the requirements of nature ye shall find the sacred streams rising in supernatural response to a faithful patience, and shall be yourselves astonished at the copiousness of these refreshing waters which ye are permitted to draw in your ministry to others.

But we must pass on, dear brethren, to consider the patience of the Passion and Death of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth." (Isa. liii. 7.) O may we in the services and meditations of this week so behold Him, the Lamb of GOD which taketh away the sins of the world, contemplating with adoring reverence the mysteries of the last sufferings of our Blessed SAVIOUR! At this time we can but for a moment consider that patience in which, tenacious of the end proposed to Himself, He advanced steadfastly along the road which led to Calvary. Behold, then, the afflictions which had pressed upon the Man of sorrows throughout His life on earth culminating as the end draws near, mark how one heavy blow follows closely upon another until the rage of Satan and the blind malice of men have done their worst; body and soul and spirit whelmed with grief, yet patient still.

"From pain to pain, from woe to woe,
With loving hearts and footsteps slow,
To Calvary with CHRIST we go.

"See how His Precious Blood
At every station pours;
Was ever grief like His?
Was ever sin like ours?"

It was in this week that He pronounced those awful woes which marked His final issue with the synagogue, His breach with the people He had nourished and brought up from Egypt to this land of their inheritance. Contemplate,

then, the laceration of His soul as He spake those words of stern denunciation of the rulers of His people and proclaimed the entire overthrow of that Jerusalem over which, on Palm Sunday, He had so tenderly lamented, weeping over it and saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." (S. Luke xix. 42.) The nation He loves rejects Him, and soon there follows the treason of a most beloved friend, and a soul once so near to JESUS has gone to its own place. (Acts i. 25.) Think of the dull and earthly hearts of those nearest to Him ready to contend for places of precedence even "in the same night in which He was betrayed," and then the Agony and Bloody Sweat, the traitor's kiss, the flight of the disciples, and the denial by that one whom He had chosen to be first of all, the mock trials, the hurryings to and fro, the insults of the rabble soldiery, the scourging, and the crown of plaited thorns, and at last the unjust condemnation and the Cross.

Something we may know of what all this really was, but in all the unknown sufferings of JESUS were more vast than an archangel could conceive or tell; and yet recount them one by one and sum the corporal torments of His death, still, still, dear brethren, there is that which doth outweigh them all, for even amidst the derelictions of the Cross His soul abides in patient victory.

O JESU, teach us, we beseech Thee, herein to follow Thee according to our measure, bearing the far lighter burden of our cross; we dare not sometimes look forward, but Thou didst steadfastly set Thy face to go up

to Jerusalem; teach us to share Thy Victory and Thy Crown!

III.

Slowness, pressure of labours, death! By these man must be tried, the natural sorrows of his youth and riper years soon followed by the end; and each of them finds its counterpart in the Spiritual Life,—the slowness, and the pressure, and the death; death ever advancing as grace urges us to crucify all that belongs to the old and unregenerate nature. And how shall we bear our penance to the end? Only "as we run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of GOD." (Heb. xii. 1, 2.)

How peculiarly Christian, how singularly unlike any of the world's virtues is this patience on which we have been meditating! The world is very apt to call a really patient man "stupid" and "spiritless," and pronounces him to be "unmanly," or perhaps condemns him as being hypocritical, and secretly proud and designing, so impossible does it seem to it that any man should bear injuries patiently for the love of GOD, and in their own hearts they say, "Let us examine him with despitefulness and torture, that we may know his meekness and prove his patience." (Wisd. ii. 19.) But O how blindly false are the judgments of the world! The patient man inactive? Yes, in one sense, certainly; often refraining from external action when his natural disposition would urge him to give taunt for taunt or to de-

mand some account of those whose conduct has been so injurious to him ; inactive, certainly in this sense, but is he inactive in the sight of GOD Who reads the heart? Is he thus refraining his soul through mere sluggishness of disposition? Oh, no! the effort which he is making, the energy which he is putting forth in the internal struggle whereby he retains his patience, the power whereby he subdues himself and calms the tumult, which else would both stir within him and break forth in violence, the resolution whereby he goes forward in the path of duty bearing this additional burden of opposition and unlove, do not all these evince a reality of laborious activity far, far, greater than very much of those visible toils which claim our admiration, and which are thus usually both accompanied by the alleviations of success and cheered by the approval of mankind? There is indeed no greater exhibition of activity than that which we may detect when visiting those laid on sick beds in long and painful sickness ; each pang to be endured calls into action the will, which is given up to GOD, by Whose grace in the strength of patience and upon the "foundation" laid, which is CHRIST JESUS, the faithful soul builds up a fair and beauteous fabric of heavenly architecture, "gold, and silver, and precious stones." Such an edifice as shall endure when the "wood, hay, and stubble" heaped up in the petulant weakness of impatience, have perished in the fire "which shall try every man's work of what sort it is." (1 Cor. iii. 12, 13.)

And then, too, let us not forget that patience is an essential part of all true *penitence*. We must learn to say with the dying robber, "and we indeed justly, for we receive the

due reward of our deeds," (S. Luke xxiii. 41,) otherwise we shall forfeit the good which our penances are intended to work in us. The least we can do, if we would be penitents indeed, is to submit ourselves to all that mortifies the pride of our nature with an unrepining submission.

Ah, there is nothing showy about patience! but that is just one of its most blessed characteristics, the very fact that we have to bear sorrows of whatever kind patiently is intended really to be to us an incentive to hide ourselves more and more in the arms of the merciful GOD and SAVIOUR. There hidden and hearkening to His Divine Voice, we are enabled to look at all things somewhat more as He does, and to see how futile is that feverish struggle in which men are endeavouring here to be relieved of trials and pains, and to recognise that our part is rather to seek in the imitation of the Patience of CHRIST to reach unto that sanctification, to the attainment of which the trials and discipline of this life are intended to be instrumental.

Yes, dear brethren, in this life's journey we may be called to enter upon some dark gloomy tunnel whence all the light and joy of heaven seems to be excluded, and yet even there, if it be but for a moment, ever and anon through some aperture in the vault a bright beam of sunlight shall penetrate its chilling shades, and though as we pass on our way we be again plunged in the murky darkness, it shall not be long before we emerge once more into the open daylight, to welcome the more its joyous radiance, and then as we look forward we shall see that again the prospect is opening out before us, and the great height which so lately frowned upon us is now no more seen upon the

way as we speed forward with a renewed and thankful confidence, that, by like perseverance and patient continuance in well doing, every obstacle shall vanish from our path, and as the end of our journey is at hand, we shall be strengthened to enter in penitent trust in GOD'S mercy even into that last and most solemn passage of "the valley of the shadow of death."

Or it may be that the glare of this world's noonday may be oppressing us. Day broke upon us long since in many bright visions of the love of GOD, all was fresh to us, and the long way seemed but to lead to ever new exhilarations of discovery. But now 'tis noontide, and the dusty, weary path stretches far before us in a dull monotony, and we ourselves are hot and travel-worn, and tempted to discouragement, and the worst of it all is that the morning mystery has gone! We can see it all, and what a weary, unpoetical, depressing, thing this Christian course turns out to be! O heavenly gift of patience! Now should we faint, dear souls, if it were not for that great fruit of the HOLY GHOST. Courage, this false noontide glare will soon be passed! Yes, is it not already being tempered by those blessed overshadowings of sorrow, by clouds which with their cooling rain refresh the languors of a parched and thirsty land? and, as the world's light passes, those mysteries of which childhood's fair dawn was but a feeble type, shall all return if we are faithful to our GOD. He will show us how short-lived and deceptive is the light which the world's day affords, and in which Satan would persuade us that we can both see and judge even the dealings of the Almighty One. And He will teach us to become again as little children,

knowing "in part," yet knowing "GOD is love," (1 S. John iv. 16,) and following in trustfulness where He shall lead.

Are we invited, dear brethren, to look for victory through patience, and does it seem very far off? That may well be so, for whilst the "battle of" the earthly "warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," (Isa. ix. 5,) he often knows not how near the end may be, the very closeness of the struggle may hide from him the great movements in which he is taking part, though victory is very near. See such an one, perhaps of obscure rank, but bravely doing his duty, and promptly obeying orders at whatever cost of danger to life and limb. The strife becomes more deadly, the death-flight of bullets pours down from every hand, his ears are deafened with the roaring of artillery, the scream and crashing of the murderous shells; around him are the dead in heaps, the dying trampled down, the air is murky with dense sulphurous clouds; still he fights blindly on, though each minute he expects to fall. But see! the wind suddenly wafts aside the smoke and dust, the thick curtain lifts,—it is but for one moment, but at a glance the soldier knows that through all this turmoil and bloody conflict a point of vantage has been gained,—and the next instant, as the smoke closes about him, a ringing cheer from those in front, and the tumult of the fast retreating foe, cause his heart to beat with a wild joy as he too, wearied as he is nigh to fainting, raises his voice to join the shout of—Victory!

More than once in some great fight by land or sea, it has happened that the commander stricken down mortally wounded, yet eagerly listening for some word to tell how

surged the tide of war, as the life blood flowed from him, and he was nigh to death, has heard the shout of victory borne to him, and the hero, ere he passed, has joined the cry—Victory! Now I die happy, shouting Victory!

Verily, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light," (S. Luke xvi. 8,) and the heroes of this world's strifes are often braver than those who are clad in a supernatural panoply that they may fight the good fight of faith. What if the triumph seem to be far off, the Church of GOD in much reproach, ourselves beset with spiritual foes? we have but to "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end," (Heb. iii. 14,) and victory is assured. We have but to fight on to the death, and we shall hear the cry of victory borne to us by the very Angel sent to call us hence.

So then, dear brethren, let us lift up our hearts to-day in generous self-dedication to the Great Captain of our Salvation, and let us beseech Him to enable us so truly to follow the example of His patience, that we may one day be made partakers of the fulness of that Resurrection victory which we shall, please GOD, so soon be celebrating in all the gladness of the blessed Paschal Feast.

And now to GOD the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST be all honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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